



Investors in Pupils
Bradford Council
Future House
Bolling Road
Bradford
BD4 7EB

5th December 2012

FAO – Headteacher - Ms Watson
Copy to 'Investors in Pupils' coordinator - Debbie Vickerman

'Investors in Pupils' Assessment

Dixons City Academy

Dear Ms Watson,

Thank you for inviting me to assess 'Investors in Pupils' at your school on the 4th December 2012. I can now confirm that the assessment report has been quality assured by the West Yorkshire Investors in Pupils Partnership. I am therefore pleased to inform you that Dixons City Academy has successfully achieved the 'Investors in Pupils' accreditation.

The decision was based on information and evidence provided by:-

- an interview with the SMT lead for pupil voice
- an interview with the 'Investors in Pupils' coordinator
- a tour of the school and all the classrooms
- interviews with representative groups of pupils from each year group (three groups in total) and other pupils during lunch and break times
- an interview with the School Council
- interviews with teaching and support staff
- an interview with a governor and parent representative
- a study of associated documentation including the school's 'Investors in Pupils' Self Evaluation Form, the coordinator's file, governors' and staff reports, a variety of newsletters, the School Improvement Plan and the Ofsted SEF etc
- the school website

I also looked at the following areas in greater detail:

1. The extent to which children, staff, parents and governors were aware of the benefits and impact of 'Investors in Pupils'.

2. Evidence of the impact of the five key themes of 'Investors in Pupils' on pupils:-

- behaviour
- learning, including target setting
- attendance and punctuality
- classroom organisation and management
- induction of staff and pupils

In addition I looked at:-

- teamwork

- finance
- pupils' capacity to act sensibly and take responsibility for their own learning
- how pupils directly influence the running of the school and participate in collective decision making
- participation strategies that increase opportunities for all pupils to express their views and feel listened to
- feedback systems that are in place to ensure that pupils can see that their views have been taken into account and made a difference.

Context

Dixons City Academy is a popular and heavily oversubscribed school and sixth form. It attracts students from across Bradford from a diverse range of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is lower than average. Although the majority of students are White British there is a higher than average proportion of students from different ethnic minority groups. The school received an Outstanding grade from Ofsted in November 2007 and has not had a full inspection since then.

The school was originally assessed for 'Investors in Pupils' in June 2008. Due to staffing changes the standard lapsed and was reintroduced in school a year ago. It is being led by the Student Voice lead.

Strengths of the school which support the principles of 'Investors in Pupils': Learning

Students are very proud of their Academy. They are equally very proud of the merits and stickers that they receive in their planners. These are issued for particularly good work in a given lesson. The merits systems differ between Years 7 and 8 and Years 9 to 11 in the sense that in Years 7 and 8 two stamps are in place in the handbook at the start of the week. However the issuing of a P2 or a late mark will result in the removing of either or both of the stamps. In Years 9 to 11, printed stickers indicating why a merit was issued are stuck in planners. In both cases the merits can be traded for rewards. However, discussions with Key Stage 4 students indicated that some of the rewards are not popular and some are largely unobtainable because of the large number of merits required to achieve them. Each planner has a section in the back to note individual and class targets.

This year the Year 7 classes have been allocated an IN (Individual Needs) member of staff who acts as a second form tutor. If successful, it will be included as a standard feature for all new Year 7 classes.

Part of the Dixons culture is the importance of personalised learning as indicated in its website statement that "The Academy actively cultivates self reliance and self discipline. The aim is to produce independent learners".

The Teaching and Learning Action Team (part of the Student Council, see School Management section for more information) have visited other schools to see teaching in practice and to gather ideas to share around school.

Each year two departments are reviewed and a questionnaire is sent to pupils asking their opinions of the subject. This year it was ICT and PE. Below is the outcome of the PE review:

What we like...

- *Very positive relationships with our teachers*
- *Variety of activities/sports that we do*
- *Variety of learning activities within theory lessons in KS4*
- *Independence and choice given in the KS4 Programme*

How the department is responding:

- *Hand ball for Y10 BTEC groups being introduced*
- *Some staff will be qualified to do archery with students*
- *Students have been to watch the England netball team play against New Zealand*
- *Cricket has now been introduced on to the extra-curricular programme*

Behaviour

Behaviour is excellent across school. However, two years ago the school introduced a consistent behaviour policy across school. The PRIDE rules are:

- Be **P**unctual
- Show **R**espect
- Follow **I**nstructions
- **D**emonstrate Positive Behaviour
- Meet High **E**xpectations

Failure to meet the PRIDE rules results in sanctions which range from P1 - verbal warning to P6 - an external exclusion. Anything above a P2 (a written warning) is largely unheard of.

School and Class Management including knowledge of school finance

Each class has written their own motto and these are on the front of the induction booklets which are in each classroom.

The school has a wide range of jobs which students can undertake in the school. These include:

- Student Council
- 'Investors in Pupils' reps
- Librarians

plus a selection of jobs specifically for the 6th form e.g. Student Managers, Drugs Peer Mediators and Technical support.

Student Council

The Student Council is made up of representatives from Year 7 to Year 12. The Council meets regularly every Friday afternoon and up to an additional five times during each term. The weekly meetings alternate between students working in their sub groups (see

below) and having a formal meeting where actions are discussed along with new business. The Council have established a number of sub groups to deal with suggestions and concerns arising from the student voice. The sub groups are:

- **Communications Team** - The main responsibility of the Communications Team is to ensure that the work of the Student Council is effectively communicated to all students, staff and parents. The team have established a Student Council notice board and a blog to internally communicate progress. They regularly attend year group assemblies to talk to all students about their work and reinforce the methods available for students to get in touch with them. They have established a regular feature in the Academy Newsletter to contact parents in order to advise them on their work.
- **Academy Action Team** - The main aim of the Academy Action Team is to work towards improving the students' way of life within the Academy through responding to ideas and suggestions that are raised on the blog.
- **Eco Green Team** - Following on from the success of the Eco Council the Eco Green Team are continuing the work that has already been started and looking at new ways to improve sustainability within the Academy. The team are working closely with students and staff internally to identify opportunities to reduce our Carbon Footprint. They are also working with third parties and external companies to look for ways to become a more sustainable school.
- **Teaching and Learning Action Team** - Teaching and Learning is what makes a school. The experience of the students in this area is paramount to the Council. The Teaching and Learning Team have been working closely with the Senior Management Team to review the policies of the Academy – especially any that regard the teaching methods and how students learn.
- **The Community Action Team** - The Community Action Team are providing help for local charities and local schools in Bradford. They are encouraging students to get involved through volunteering time to work on local projects and for local charities. The team are also involved with raising funds to support charities both locally and nationally.

The Student Council have a 'drop in' desk running at various points in the year where students can raise issues with them. As a result of this the students have produced a film on the intranet which explains what they have recently been discussing and what changes they are putting in place. These include:

- Religious bracelets
- Decorations in school for Eid
- Ball games

'Investors in Pupils' Reps

Two students per form group are 'Investors in Pupils' reps. Students are quite clear as to the differences between Student Council reps and 'Investors in Pupils' reps. Student Council reps are responsible for the evolution of the school and 'Investors in Pupils' reps are responsible for gathering the opinions of the students. The reps did a presentation on the school budget and made it witty and interesting, e.g. "How much does it cost to educate you each year?"
a) £900

- b) £5000
- c) £1500
- d) £2500

The answer is £5000. That's the equivalent to buying 30 brand new Ipod Touches!!"

When asked, students had a reasonable level of understanding of the budget of the school and knew that each department had their own individual budgets. Students have some knowledge of Governors and were able to explain the role they undertake in school. However, when asked the question, "Do Governors get paid?" reactions were very mixed, particularly in Key Stage 3, and I will address this further in the recommendations section.

With regard to the understanding of staff roles, the school is adding to the "Staff Room" section of the intranet photos of staff (including support staff), their job roles and some information about their interests.

Attendance

As part of the Induction book each tutor group has created the students are provided with the attendance data for their tutor group for that term, along with the rest of the tutor groups' figures.

The Academy does not have any system of bells or buzzers to indicate the end of lessons. Students are therefore expected to keep an eye on the time and to be at registration and lessons promptly.

Induction

Each tutor group has an Induction book. This contains a motto, attendance data and information on students in the group (including a photo). Both staff and students talked about how much the Induction booklets are valued and a very useful resource for new people into the class. One class teacher gave the example of showing it to exchange students.

Parent / Carer and Governor Involvement

When parents were asked about the school's ethos they were very complimentary about the school. Mr Hussain (a parent) spoke about a strong relationship between the school and the Student Council teams. He described the Student Council as "a solicitor between the two halves".

Parents felt that teachers have a lot of time for students and that communication is a two way dialogue. One parent's child fell gravely ill this year and the teacher came to the house and gave lots of support. Another parent mentioned that her son does performing arts and was recently in a production in London. Again the Academy ensured that work was always provided and liaised with his tutor. The Academy produces a termly newsletter for parents which is available online along with key letters to parents.

The Chair of Governors has some awareness of 'Investors in Pupils'. She has been interviewed (on film) as part of the process and this film has been shared with students. The chair is aware that a member of staff is leading on the standard. She is very proud that the Academy produces well rounded individuals who are confident and capable.

Areas for development

Please note these actions are compulsory. Areas must be acted upon to ensure that the standard is maintained in the future.

- None

Recommendations

Please note the following are recommendations only and therefore not compulsory.

- Reactions from Key Stage 4 were mixed as to the rewards they receive. A review of this fits into the plan you have for reviewing sanctions and rewards.
- Governors' knowledge could be increased as the responses from students were a bit below the standard expected of a Secondary school.
- The blogs are in existence but lacking content from the students. It would have been nice to see some comments from the students.

The school has an abundance of talented, creative and enthusiastic students. As part of its approach to student support and development the school should seriously consider how students could take a lead in addressing the Areas for Development and Recommendations above.

I would like to thank all the students and staff of Dixons City Academy for a very enjoyable visit and for the opportunity and privilege to witness such a positive school community in action.

I wish the school every success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Myers

'Investors in Pupils' Assessor