

# Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council – Adults and Children’s Services

## Select Committee Member Visit

<b>Service visited:</b> Outwood Academy Bishopsgarth	
<b>Date of visit:</b> 25 April 2018	<b>Time of visit:</b> 10am
<b>Details of main contact during visit</b>	
Name: Mark Hassack (Executive Principal) / Steve Merrifield (Principal)	
<b>What did you see?</b>	
<p>We were split into two groups and each received a tour of the school. This included the Inclusion Unit, the Consequences Room, and visited classrooms to observe behaviour and see the Consequences board in operation.</p> <p>During the tour, Mark spoke to several children during the tour. Sometimes it was just a greeting and other times he commented on their behaviour. Children that were on a C3 were spoken to by Mark outside the classroom.</p> <p>There were 2 children that were on a FTE on the day of the visit.</p>	
<b>Who did you talk to – staff / service users / family / carers?</b>	
Staff and students.	
<b>What were the key issues arising from the visit?</b>	
<p>The school has a role of 480 children with 56% in receipt of free school meals.</p> <p>Bishopsgarth has historically had low results in comparison to other schools and the Principals outlined how they were determined to improve outcomes for all. Prior to the Trust taking over the school, poor behaviour and informal exclusions were reported as being evident.</p> <p>Pupils were reported as now being more confident in attending the school.</p> <p>It was noted that the curriculum had recently changed to become much more content focussed, with assessment purely through exams. There was evidence of this type of preparation for exams during lessons visited. Additional support was provided to pupils who needed it. 60% of Year 11 had received some form of 1:1 tuition, through tutors employed by the school.</p> <p>Members felt that staff genuinely wanted to improve the outcomes of the children.</p> <p>Attendance on the previous week had been 91% compared with 86% in September/October 2017. This was regarded as being a significant improvement. Should a child not attend when they were due to, a phone call is made within 1 hour of a child not arriving at school followed by the full time Attendance Officer going to knock on the door and take a child to school if they were fit to attend. We were informed that parents felt this was backing them up to ensure attendance. Alarm clocks had also been purchased.</p> <p>It was pleasing to see that a Reward and Recognition scheme was in place through the `Praising Stars` boards prominently positioned in the corridor.</p>	

There was a quiet atmosphere in school with children being well behaved in class and the corridors, and appearing to be on task. We observed the playground during break time and this was also very quiet and pupils moved in an orderly manner. The Principal is obviously well respected and has a good rapport with students. The Principal was asked how many of them are hard core badly behaved and his answer was about six. There was an example of managed moves that had broken down due to ongoing behaviour issues and the pupils had returned to Bishopsgarth.

Observing the Young People throughout the school they were found to be relaxed and comfortable. In classrooms they were working and in social areas they were enjoying time with their friends. Teachers and support staff were visible throughout.

One young girl was seen to be have anxiety problems and was in the corridor. A teacher was with her periodically. Some friends also supported her.

We spoke with several young people, one of whom had previously been excluded and was now doing well in school. None of them seemed to begrudge the treatment they had received in terms of behaviour policy.

We spoke with one teacher that was on loan from another school. She was very supportive of the regime. Morale seemed good within the school.

In relation to the behaviour policy, we were informed that the teacher would give a warning to the class or an individual before starting to issue consequences.

We were told that consequences were given to children who are causing interruptions and stopping others learning. However, in one class a child was on a C3 for chewing gum. Each classroom has a Consequences Board on which pupils names are displayed if they receive a sanction during a lesson. This is wiped clean after every lesson.

A fourth sanction (C4) would see pupils removed from the lesson and needing to attend the Matrix room. Although we did not see evidence of this during the visit, this is where a child might be removed from his/her own class and placed in another class to mitigate disruption.

Failure to complete detentions or misbehaviour in matrix, see pupils receive a C5 which is a session in the Consequences Room.

We visited the Consequence room which had 4 children in it at the time of the visit. We spoke to the four students in there. For one it was his first visit, he understood fully why he was there. Again there was an acceptance from all that they had broken the rules and been given opportunities to resolve their problem but had chosen not to do so. Some had been in the Room several times. They were all provided with work/reading.

It was not seen as a pleasant environment, the room was perceived as being very dark and dismal by those on the visit with the 12 cubicles painted in matt black. Once in a booth, the pupils could only see the supervising teacher, and not each other.

The room was staffed by a senior member of staff, working on a rotation basis. It was stated that the aim of staff was to ensure pupils remained engaged and returned to lessons as soon as possible. It was reported that the Room had been regularly full in the early days of the Academy but this was now less often the case.

It was stated that a common approach with parents was important, and in other schools buy-in was secured over the longer term as results were seen to improve. Pupils who did not necessarily have the right equipment would be provided with it, rather than punished, but overall expectations were high. It was stated that Outwood Trust has common systems in place but these can be flexed as appropriate.

The Consequences approach has recently been amended at Bishopsgarth on a pilot basis. Half hour detentions had been introduced which if were not completed would be converted into 1 hour. This had seen a drop in the number of pupils that were undertaking one hour detentions, and subsequently converted into FTEs.

Since the policy had been amended there had been 3 C6s (FTEs) in 2 weeks compared to 43 in the previous 2 week period

The Inclusion Base housed the Academy's Bridge Centre and Personalised Learning Centre. Staff stated that due to the efforts of the team there were around 30 students who were now accessing education who were not previously attending school.

There appeared to be a high number of staff within this area to support students with 14 TAs in the Base. The Trust's Regional SENCO was also based at the school.

The Personalised Learning Centre (PLC) was a quieter, safe area for more vulnerable children with predominantly SEN. They had Individual learning plans.

The Bridge was an area used to bridge the gap into mainstream e.g. If a child is recovering from a bereavement. A counsellor is employed by the school for the equivalent of 1 day per week to ensure the mental health wellbeing of children that are referred to her (1 day per week provision was described as being similar to other schools, with the counsellor working across several in the group).

Access to counselling was provided to pupils after an initial discussion with members of staff.

Overall there appeared good integration between all students, including those with additional needs resulting from physical disabilities.

**Any recommendations / feedback for consideration?**

Some of the atmosphere was felt to be harsh. When one teacher was asking for students to put their hands up or there would be a 'consequence'. One Councillor felt uncomfortable in the Consequence Room.

The school may wish to redecorate the Consequences room. It needs to be lighter. Although a form of punishment it still needs to be conducive to learning.

Signed: Cllr Inman, Cllr Cunningham, Cllr Hewitt, Cllr Watson

Date: 25 April 2018