

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

Select Committee Member Visit

Service visited: St Michael’s Academy/ Chair of Pupil Inclusion Panel	
Date of visit: 1 May 2018	Time of visit: 10am
Details of main contact during visit	
Name: Clare Mahoney / Leanne Chilton	
Job Title: Vice Principal / Principal Advisor	
What did you see?	
<p>We visited St Michael’s Academy. The school is part of the Carmel Education Trust. The Vice Principal is also chair of the Borough’s PIP and so the operation of the PIP was discussed during the same visit.</p>	
Who did you talk to – staff / service users / family / carers?	
<p>From the school – Mr Ramsey (Principal), Clare Mahoney (Vice Principal and Safeguarding Lead and chair of PIP), Mark Scott (Assistant Principal). We met with other members of staff during the tour of the school, including in the SEN base and Emmaus Centre. The tour was hosted by students of the school.</p> <p>From the Local Authority – Leanne Chilton (Principal Advisor), Kath Reach (Placement and Exclusion Officer)</p>	
What were the key issues arising from the visit?	
<u>St Michael’s Academy</u>	
<p>St Michael’s is a Catholic Academy and is based in a new building. A number of features of the school were designed and made by pupils including stained glass in the chapel. The school had a roll of 906 and 43% of pupils were Catholic. The schools intake stretched from Port Clarence to Wynyard. 39% of Year 7 received Free School Meals.</p> <p>The focus of the visit was on behaviour. The school operated on the principle of applying restorative justice wherever possible, and had been praised by Ofsted for its approach.</p> <p>High standards of behaviour were in place, in order to set standards for life, and the school had developed its ethos in conjunction with parents. Zero tolerance for some behaviours was in place, for example smoking (not now regarded as an issue at the school), however the school focussed on understanding each student and this was key to its approach.</p> <p>The schools had contracts in place with parents. Relationships with families was generally good but if a parent did not attend school to discuss any issues, their child did not have access to the full curriculum until the issue was resolved. A Parents Group was in place in order to have discussions with the Principal and discussions were held before changes to policies.</p> <p>Often issues are driven by inappropriate usage of social media, and out of school incidents that the school is expected to address.</p> <p>The transition from Primary was seen as key in order to set expectations. St Michael’s worked with pupils at Year 4 and 5 in order to begin to prepare. The SENCO sees every child with identified needs ahead of the admission to secondary.</p>	

The Transition Guarantee was seen as being helpful to the process but was particularly focussed on academic attainment, and there may be a need to improve the wider pastoral issues within transition processes.

Operation Encompass was seen as being very beneficial - 'priceless'. This is the process whereby schools are informed if children have been exposed to domestic abuse in their home.

The schools approach to praise and supporting improvement included Achievement Assemblies and reward trips. This supported pupils who had improved, not just consistent performers.

Exclusions are used when necessary. On the day of the visit there was one FTE in place - one pupil was completing his 12th day of FTE. This amount of FTEs for one student was however regarded as being highly unusual for the school. For ongoing behavioural issues a managed move within the Trust's other schools would be the first option. It was important for schools to treat pupils on a managed move as one of their own pupils from the beginning, rather than regarding them as being on trial during which behaviour must be perfect.

Pastoral Learning Managers were in place for each Year group and their role was to develop a plan to address behaviours and report these to senior staff.

Support is accessed via educational psychology as and when required.

On-site support included the development of the Emmaus Centre. Referrals to this can only be made by a member of the Senior Leadership Team, or a Pastoral Learning Manager. The Centre is used to support pupils for a variety of reasons including poor behaviour and internal isolation, but also emotional support, time out, mental health concerns, anger management, and restorative justice. Pupils are also used the resource to have restorative meetings with each other when they have fallen out. The usual rules of the school apply with the Centre. Places have been offered to pupils from other schools (St Michael's had been one of the first to offer these types of places to schools).

The Good Shepherd Centre focusses on supporting pupils with SEN but also supports other students who need time limited support. Students may have it written into their plans that they are able to access this area, and undertake some lessons there. The Centre is managed by the SENCO and is accessed by students in each year group.

Pupil Inclusion Panel

The PIP had now been in place since September and was seen as delivering benefits in terms of greater co-operation and sharing of good practice between schools. A key aim of the PIP was to develop a common ethos for Stockton schools.

The PIP has enabled challenge to schools by fellow professionals on the panel. Key issues identified through learning at the panel included:

- What support is in place for students with repeated exclusions?
- Has each school's PLMs (or equivalent) identified what support and from what agencies is in place in each case for those students with behavioural issues (similar to the approach at St Michael's)?
- If schools have enabled additional/external support to be put in place, it is important to consider when this support was arranged and whether enough time had been allowed for it to have an impact before further sanctions were applied
- Had senior leadership seen the paperwork being presented on behalf of the school at PIP/ other

cases meetings? What was the quality of this paperwork like?

- If an intervention had been made, what had been the impact?
- Staff training and confidence in using de-escalation techniques was crucial
- A much greater emphasis on Early Help was needed.
- There were no current barriers to making a PEX but the impact on other schools and the local authority can be significant.
- Some schools had in place an automatic PEX for setting the fire alarm off. This was a potential longer term/life time punishment for one mistake
- 'Consequences' type policies risk replacing classroom management techniques and understanding each child.
- Pupils who have received 45 days of FTES do not necessarily need to receive a PEX as a next step (no further FTEs can be given). Alternative provision and approaches can be arranged, rather than an exclusion.
- The majority of PEX were now due to persistent breaches of behaviour policies, whereas previously they were due to one off serious incidents.

It was noted that the Local Authority was undertaking work to colour code the status of the number of FTEs each week, and discuss each case when the student reaches 30 days FTEs (nb. see note below). The Authority intended to discuss each case with the relevant school. This would be a resource intensive piece of work.

There were currently 15-20 pupils at this threshold in the Borough.

The visit highlighted the following possible areas for recommendations:

- ensuring schools assess what support has been put in place for a child when they hit a certain trigger point eg. 20 days FTE (nb. see reference to Local Authority work outlined above).
- assessments of each school's approach to staff training and approach to accessing Early Help
- Governor training and support – further develop this eg. develop checklists to ensure all key issues are considered at panel meetings, such as what SEN procedures have been followed (whilst recognising the increasing lack of local connections to schools), and promote attendance at training sessions.

Any recommendations / feedback for consideration?

St Michael's was praised for its approach to understanding each student and attempting to prevent exclusions wherever possible.

Signed: Cllr Clark, Cllr Cunningham, Cllr Inman, Peter Mennear
Cllr McCoy (Cabinet Member) was also in attendance

Date: 1 May 2018