

## Notes on task group visits by Cllr Bonham and Cllr Moore

Visit 1 – Samworth Academy – 29 April 2025 – Part of Tudor Grange Academy Trust

A faith school

We were greeted, offered refreshments and ushered into room with Principal, SENCO, Deputy Head (?) and Neil Tansley (chair of Advisory Board?? – not a trustee)

The Head gave a talk about the school, acknowledged its catchment area has significant social disadvantages. The school is now full and has a waiting list of children with diagnosed ASD (11%) and ADHD (47%). There has been an increase from 7 to 30 children with EHCPs in a year. 14 children on role are currently awaiting special provision, with an alternative provision proposed. A significant number of students are recently arrived immigrants (mainly Ukrainians and Africans (from Nigeria and Zimbabwe) and some Eastern Europeans. All are well integrated. There is also an increasing number of students with SEMH and neurodiversity.

### Special provision arrangements and monitoring

- Mentoring team offers interventions e.g. for bereavement, has training from THRIVE. Monitoring is reviewed regularly.
- Children can approach staff if feeling anxious
- The school has zones of regulation, separating year groups for transitions, with staff stationed in corridors as a deterrent for running, jostling, bullying etc
- School nurse offers drop in sessions
- SPA discussion (management education?) every Thursday afternoon
- Targets from EHCPs are on school computer network so teachers could immediately access targets for individual children during lessons and RAG-rate progress towards achievement. This was started initially with Y7 students at the beginning of the year and is now being rolled out across all years. It has received good feedback from staff. It identifies those children where provision isn't bringing about progress, so they receive small group tuition in an outdoor environment (Forest School) working towards behavioural targets. Travel training is included as targets if indicated in annual reviews of EHCPs.
- The Trust holds disadvantage committee meetings, which break down data on progress.
- There are staff briefings which highlight the key SEND concerns and any home/school dimensions, which are then discussed by SENCO and college leaders
- Children have 20 minutes reading time daily. There is very low avoidance of this.
- Children in Y11 are supported into employment or college.

HNB pays for mentoring, school nurse and TAs.

### Data collection

We were given printed information on cost of provision per pupil, with average cost compared to average impact.

Attendance data is used as an additional index of impact

### Exclusions

There have been four this year, three of whom have EHCPs, 2 in Y8, 2 in Y10, All are now attending the alternative provision at Carisbrooke. The exclusions were for violent behaviour, threatening to staff and other children. The risk to the child by exclusion is assessed. The number could be higher but the school has invested a big proportion of its budget in preventing social exclusion.

### Observations

We were able to watch corridor behaviours during transition between lessons. We watched a group of 19 children in a physics lesson on energy as part of revision for end of year exams. The children were from low ability bands. The teacher used a whiteboard display with good graphics. Attention from most of the children was good but a small group of four talked and fidgeted. The teacher ignored this behaviour but at one point indicated that he wanted quiet.

We were given a tour of the deciduous woodland as part of the school site (Forest School). This had numerous wooden structures for shelter, climbing, etc.

We then met with five Y8 students without a member of staff present, two of whom had SEND (one physical disability, the other ASD). Four of the five spoke readily and with confidence. They rated the school highly, praised the mentoring being offered and the low incidence of bullying with staff intervening effectively to prevent. But as the conversation proceeded, they confided that there was disruptive talking in all classes which teachers didn't interrupt, and which they found disturbing and irritating, as it interfered with concentration and opportunities to get on with work.

Overall we were impressed with the following:

- Good recording of performance data, particularly the cost of implementation
- The lack of antisocial behaviour in corridors during transitions
- The enthusiasm and energy of the new SENCO in introducing a system for awareness of targets in classes and tracking of progress.

Visit 2- Stokes Wood Primary School. 30 April 2025

When we arrived at the school, we were greeted by the SENCO who gave us some information about provision: the school has a nursery which offers weekly sessions of support. It has many children from abroad who have no English when they arrive.

### Special provision arrangements and monitoring

A designated special provision works every afternoon with children with EHCPs towards their targets. At present, it accommodates Key Stage 1 children in a class with a capacity for 11 (The Rainbow Room), all of whom have EHCPs or are waiting for the process to be completed; and are non-verbal. They are following a sensory-based curriculum. Seven are in Reception, of whom two access inclusion in the Reception class. lunchtimes and afternoon; three are in Y1. One child with multiple SEND attends for mornings only and is supported in a separate room with two adults, such is the level of his challenging behaviour. There is no extra funding for this particular child. The school expects to admit a further 17 children from their catchment area into the Rainbow Room. One child on role is attending full-time at a pupil referral unit. One is in alternative provision.

The space formally used for the school library is being adapted to create small rooms to offer 1:1 teaching support.

The school receives support from the SEND team via a link teacher as well as the Learning, Communication and Interaction team, the Mental Health Support team, the School Nurse and a long-term family support worker. Educational Psychologists visit in connection with individual children and will attend annual reviews of EHCPs if involved. The SENCO has frequent meetings and telephone contact with parents.

### Observations

We were able to watch a movement activity in the hall with half a dozen SEND children, all with ASD, each with a TA (TA), being helped to carry out movements on a mat as a sensory activity. We were told that another group was having supported reading at this time.

We were then taken to observe a class of 21 children, with three adults (class teacher, 2 TAs). The lesson was about protected characteristics and was well-planned with frequent changes of activities: listening to the teacher talking from a white board and flip chart, some written recording, conversations with a partner, standing in two lines one facing the other, taking turns to talk and listen. The TAs were seated near target children and talked to them to support them. The class teacher also approached and talked to the SEND children, and chose one to answer a question put to the class. There was a calm working atmosphere with

good positive management e.g. the teacher counted down from 3 to 1 to gain the classes attention after a talking activity. However, three of the SEND children showed disengagement, self-stimulating, fidgeting, yawning. The SENCO agreed that it was a big challenge to offer inclusion within the constraints of the National Curriculum in a mainstream class. This raised the question as to whether this was inclusion in name only. However, we then went into another class, where two boys with ASD were being accommodated by each having their own desk, rather than sitting on tables with other children. This offered them stability without the distraction of other children moving and invading their personal space, an arrangement which had caused anxiety and meltdowns after school at home.

We were given a tour of the school's Forest School which is well equipped with equipment for outdoor play and learning.

Overall we were impressed with the following:

- The use of funding to set up what is in effect a small special school in the Rainbow Room for children with severe SEND from ASD.
- A firmly-child centred approach is assessing and providing for individual needs
- Clever use of strategies and support staff to attempt inclusion for children with communication difficulties with the teacher actively involved in their teaching.

### Visit 3- Crown Hills Community College 30 April 2025

At the start of the visit we joined a meeting with the SENCO and Deputy Principal who gave us information about the school. Its overall aim is to keep students in lessons. Information on each child is given to teachers as to how to adjust the school's behaviour management policy for individual needs, together with a photograph of the child and the features of each specific learning difficulty. There is also online information for teachers for each child who has an EHCP, which lists the desired outcomes.

The school has many children who have English as a second language, with Asian languages predominant as the home language. There are some children at KS4 who are unaccompanied, including asylum seekers from Afghanistan. A teacher offers ESOL lessons.

Children are withdrawn from mainstream lessons daily for small group teaching on literacy, using a variety of approaches including Read Write, a phonics programme with three levels, plus activities to improve comprehension (but not at present paired reading which aims to improve whole word recognition). These groups accord with three levels of ability, rather than year groups. All are making good progress. If not, they would be referred on for specialist advice. The groups visit the school library for one lesson per week. Targets are set for each child, with badges for achievement. We were given paperwork on this curriculum.

High needs block funding helps with employment of TAs, and providing equipment for SEND: Chrome boards (tablets?) and specially-adapted laptops for the four children with visual impairment.

Older children are taken to offer support to the community, such as food banks, visits to elderly persons' homes and litter picking.

There is a mentor on the staff for 13 children with SEMH and mixed ethnicity. A teacher We heard about two children with ASD, a girl who was high functioning but masking in school then showing extreme exhaustion at home; and a boy who was attacking his mother at home and showing extremely challenging behaviour in school. The staff received support from the LCI team and the child was given a card with a five point scale for spotting and de-escalating his level of anger. This had been successful in helping him to self-regulate.

There is as much communication with parents as possible, with coffee mornings, talks on social development, reading, strategies to use with children with ASD, and opportunities to talk. They are involved in reviews.

### Observations

We were taken to a PSE lesson for Personal and Social Education. The topic being covered was Islam. The children were seated in rows and each had an A3 sheet, scaffolded to record information. All attended to the teacher, including one student who has ASD. There was no potentially disruptive behaviour,

We then went to a Y9 nurture group of around a dozen children, supported two LSAs. All the children had just eaten a breakfast which they had cooked and were clearing up as we entered the room. There was a range of equipment to support activities. They were all completely engaged, in a warm and relaxed atmosphere.

The lead LSA, a long standing member of staff, who had set up the group, provided information on how it functioned. The group offers training in independence skills: gardening, cooking, clearing up; as well as thinking and conversational skills. We were told that the group currently includes two students who have EHCPs. Other children also had special needs (most with moderate learning difficulties, others with visual impairment, hearing impairment and ASD).

We were then taken to see the Forest School, again a valuable resource for some recuperative activity, away from the pressures of the classroom for vulnerable children.

We met with the Head of Pastoral Care, who described his development of the school's behavioural policy, drawing on his own experience in two city community colleges as Head of Science, as well as his study of research into positive behaviour management, which had led to the formation of his vision in addressing the criticisms of the Ofsted inspection in 2016 which judged that children's needs were not being met. He wanted to do what was right for children.

Finally, we met with two students with ASD who spoke very positively about their experiences and the support they were receiving, with no criticisms to be made.

#### School's behavioural policy

When beginning work in the school, the Head of Pastoral Care had realised that interventions on a rising scale of sanctions, leading to detentions and suspensions, was not effective in curbing undesirable behaviours. He also recognised that special needs were individual to each child, and that challenging behaviours were often the result of missed and/or unrecognised needs.

His first change, imposition of an immediate and predictable sanction of detention for disruptive or disrespectful behaviour in class, to give students clear and firm boundaries, was not popular with staff so that he met with stiff resistance and some staff left the school. It did, however, improve behaviour. Alongside this, he looked at pastoral roles and realised that mentors were missing needs. He introduced a system by which each Head of Year and Assistant Head plus one

non-teacher had more time to liaise with families and offer children a safe space, with time to think and rest breaks as necessary. He also introduced once-a-week staff meetings to discuss key children who were especially vulnerable, to avoid exclusion. Staff were given training in positive behaviour management. In addition, he introduced zones of regulation to keep year groups apart throughout the school day, so younger children were protected from jostling or bullying during transitions. He encouraged staff to focus on acceptable behaviour, however slight, and to publicly notice and praise them. A post box was provided for pupils to report any friends who were in pain, or to self-report. As a long-term reward, a Christmas Success Fete (a film and pizza) was held for those students who had shown particular commitment with golden tickets for children who were struggling socially. Additional funding was used to employ a temporary TA to prevent one child (see above) being excluded: he came into school for 2 hours daily and was supported in a separate building in the grounds, then gradually reintegrated into mainstream class, accompanied by his TA. The school was successful in its bid for one year funding for this.

The overall scheme had now been operating for five years and had produced a significant change, both in children's behaviour and in staff morale with everyone much happier, and with the result that the school had an outstanding rating from Ofsted in January 2025. There had been no exclusions in the current year and no students had been referred to pupil referral units.

Funding which came with EHCPs, together with High Needs block money, was used to employ a mentor and to train an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) who could drop into lessons as a safe adult for children to approach, also to get children into school. Children who were eligible for exam concessions, but reluctant to accept them were now receiving interventions to familiarise them with what was involved and overcome embarrassment. It had also funded work with school leavers; a pupil with visual impairment had received training to catch the bus to college and had now been offered a place at De Montfort University to study computer graphics. Within the REACH programme, the school is being partnered with city organisations, to offer work experience to KS4 students.

In general, High Needs Block funding paid for TAs and was considered to be an investment in interventions, nurturing and support for children with ASD.

Overall we were impressed with the following:

- The use of funding to offer cleverly-tailored interventions for children with SEND, particularly those with high ability and ASD.
- A firmly-child centred approach, assessing and providing for individual needs

- A highly successful and effective programme for managing challenging behaviour which had brought about a positive change in the school culture and in teacher attitudes and skills
- The passion and commitment of key members of staff to the project of meeting children's needs