



## **Overview of Post ISI Inspection Progress Review 14th – 15th March 2016**

*The following document contains excerpts of a comprehensive report by external reviewer, David Thomson (March 2016), and outlines the reports main findings:*

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This two-day, on-site review included:

- Meetings with the Headteacher.
  - Lesson observations in Maths and English Y1-Y6 and EYFS- Nursery & Reception.
  - Detailed verbal feedback to Class teachers in all 5 classes covering age ranges from Nursery to Y6.
  - Brief interviews with a range of staff on teaching, learning and mindfulness strategy.
  - Brief interview with 2 pupils in Y5 and Y6.
  - Brief scrutiny of children's books, work and display.
  - Scrutiny of Handbooks/Policies, Planning.
  - Meeting with the teacher with responsibility for SEN.
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### **Introduction**

This review was commissioned by the Trustees to provide feedback on progress achieved half-way through the new Head's first year and to make an assessment of progress against the ISI 2015 areas of development. The review therefore seeks to identify any new initiatives and developments in provision and practice since September 2015 and to provide a summing up of the journey so far, with any relevant recommendations as well as acknowledgement of future intentions and aspirations. The review will inform Head and Trustee deliberations for 2016-2017 and beyond.

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## **Main findings**

“...significant positive progress has been made in all important areas in the short space of 6 months under the leadership of the new Head who has galvanised both staff and school community. She is to be congratulated on all that she has achieved. Her deeply committed and rigorous leadership has begun the process of pulling everything together and already created a largely coherent staff body with appropriate standards of professional practice.”

“...the review is confident that in terms of the development areas outlined by ISI, the school is now, impressively, moving in the right direction and that a new foundation and willingness for future change and improvement has been laid.”

### **Impact of new Head's Leadership**

“It was evident from interviews with teachers and TAs that there is a new energy and excitement, and that staff (and parents by report) are happy.”

“During interviews, staff were free with their appreciation of what the Head has achieved and there is a clear sense of vision from the Head's leadership, particularly with regard to the establishment of an agreed approach to mindfulness in the context of teaching and learning (an ISI development objective). The Head has conducted individual and group meetings with staff, observed all staff teach and gathered information from questionnaire reviews of provision to establish standards and expectations of professional practice. In particular the new emphasis on training is a strong feature. It should also be noted that parent 'training' through frequent communication in writing, verbally, in Pujas and eg via the excellent new 'HeadsUp' blog, have also contributed to positive development. Parents previously received specific feedback on the ISI report and a staff workshop was also led on those findings which also set out benchmarks for excellence – attended by the new Head before her official start. Further training is planned and will include, for example, sessions for staff at Downsview School regarding specific needs which is excellent.”

### **Teaching and Learning**

“...In terms of teaching and learning across the school, including EYFS, all teachers observed had planned in depth, and pupils enjoyed engaging and varied lessons and made progress. Teachers showed real commitment. Learning sequences were skilfully managed on an appropriate incline of difficulty and differentiation was a central approach of all staff. Opportunities for extension and support were woven appropriately into lessons all of which were supported by at least one TA up to Y6. In one lesson, five adults were available for 22 pupils, some with complex needs including two ASD pupils. All lessons were judged at least 'good' and most had features of excellence. Some were 'excellent' in their own right...”

### **Learning behaviours**

“The children's learning behaviours were excellent throughout. Pupils were happy and engaged in lessons and worked together impressively and with their teachers.”

### **Teaching Assistants**

“All TAs observed were working impressively with individuals and small groups of pupils, asking good questions, providing empathetic and effective support. This is a strength of provision particularly as TA support is available to all staff.”

## **Curriculum planning and assessment**

“There is written evidence in planning and minutes and the Headteacher’s reports to Trustees that much work has gone into curriculum planning and development...”

“Assessment is moving forwards with a review in the Head’s first term, and investment in the ‘Tapestry’ software platform and staff training will ensure this rolls out in September 2016 providing appropriate depth of tracking data and good practice...”

## **Training Plan**

“A training plan is now in place which is excellent for staff development and also because of the quality of inset providers and events.”

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## **Overall Achievements**

“On a broad front then, the Head is to be congratulated on:

- Forging a new future vision embedded in Buddhist practice (and testified as such with a level of commitment and excitement by teaching staff and TAs during interviews) as the way forward.”
  - “Re-forming the community – a most impressive feat of initial leadership...”
  - “Ensuring appropriate standards of professional practice and provision with meetings, reviews, observation and new investment as evidenced in lessons observed throughout the school.
  - Supporting new staff.
  - Maintaining the very special ethos of the school most notable in the quality of pupil interactions and collaboration.
  - Raising public awareness with some excellent local press and radio coverage setting out a future vision and the newly instituted Headteacher’s blog.
  - Retaining pupils and families.
  - Creating some very positive informal feedback from parents.
  - The notable improvement of the presentation and care of premises – by replacing the cleaners and emphasising the importance of display.”
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## **Other developments since September 2015**

- “Appointment of the school’s first Bursar.
- Appointment of a new Music visiting specialist
- Expansion of PE provision leading to the inaugural performance of the school at a City-wide schools festival of dance, and separately, children’s parade.
- Ensuring EHCP for one pupil and providing 1:1 SEN support.

- Open Mornings for prospective parents.
- Student/intern TA.
- Use of Volunteers.
- Expansion of Forest School into KS2.
- Messaging and marketing through Press and Radio interviews and delivery of a Brighton Fringe workshop on mindfulness which has had to be extended due to over-subscription.
- Improved access for parents to the Head.
- University of Sussex 2nd Primary PGCE student placement from next term.
- Untangling complications due to issues arising from payment and non-payment of deposits.
- New IWB ordered for Dragonfly (Reception)."

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## ISI Development areas

### 1. The development of a Teaching, Learning and Curriculum strategy which integrates mindfulness across the curriculum.

Findings:

"...in conversation with the Head it is clear that a new strategy integrating T&L and Mindfulness is a key focus of her leadership."

"...On the ground, there is much evidence of an agreed approach...and the new emphasis on training is relevant here with, for example, the internationally renowned author and educationalist Professor Guy Claxton personally leading the staff in two days of INSET exploring the nature of learning...The Buddhist ethos of the school provides a rich context for the implementation of the 'Building Learning Power' programme created by Professor Claxton, given the alignment of pedagogical vision between the BLP dispositions of learning and the Buddhist precepts. BLP is now a declared objective for adoption as part of establishing the new teaching and learning and mindfulness strategy over the short to medium term. This is a very exciting development and working personally with Prof Claxton who has committed to the school in terms of its ethos and potential, will ensure that pedagogical development will be of a very high quality and will build on the unique values characteristics of the school. Staff are already enthused by the first INSET and the end of term INSET just completed with the Professor has created further commitment to a unified approach to teaching, learning and mindfulness."

"The definition of mindfulness was felt by individuals, to be agreed by all, and teachers planned to include mindful engagement in many different aspects of the school day and in lessons."

"Thematic approaches to Dharma have been reviewed in schemes of work to ensure that schemes are taking mindfulness into account. Topics are now planned over a two year cycle in the double classes and drawing on Ethics and Philosophy from her own teaching background, the Teacher in Lotus has led this process. The school has an on-going relationship with some of the country's leading mindfulness practitioners in Education including eg Katherine Weare.

The definition of mindfulness within the context of the Buddhist ethos is broad and includes a strong emphasis on kindness ie, being 'kindful' with words and interactions. Ample evidence of this was observed during the two day visit both in and out of lessons and in the playground. Pupils are attentive to their own and other's needs in and out of class. The first 15 minutes of lunchtime is shared in silence encouraging mindful eating. Mindfulness is not just about 'meditation' (which does

occur at the beginning of the morning and afternoon) but is also about living the practice of the five precepts and the eight-fold path that underpin the school's approach. Teachers consciously plan and interact with pupils in and out of lessons with these in mind and include meditation, visualisations and relaxation in their planning. That lessons are planned to be good in the beginning, middle and end, that children have opportunities to reflect and that lessons often begin with 'sitting' all spring from the commitment to a mindful education that is part of the school's fabric.

In Y5/6, the focus this term for their daily puja is on noticing, awareness and concentration. The Y3/Y4 class for example, looks at 1 precept every one or two days and teachers refer to it through the day. Y1/Y2 teacher and TAs have a particular focus on conflict resolution to manage some issues in a group with complex needs – improving the quality of learning and engagement within the context of the precepts. Nursery and Reception children are mindful through Yoga and eating and through skilful 'drawing of attention' by staff as part of the half-termly theme – currently the senses – ideally suited to the very beginnings of mindfulness. Reading materials are chosen with themes eg, of Fairness, in mind. 'Flower Watering' certificates given out at quarterly Puja's that celebrate children's growth in areas of the 8-fold path. Mindfulness is also on display with Buddhist artefacts and banners, pictures and words visible throughout the school. Weekly puja's focus specifically on mindful practice in the community and lessons through stories and words and pupil and staff presentations including those of visitors, which from time to time include the monks and nuns from Plum Village and other traditions. In these ways, mindfulness, teaching and learning are clearly integrated on a daily basis and understood to be the key focus of lessons.

Staff mindfulness is a part of this approach. The staff 'sit' together eg at the beginning of the week, and individually, some staff interviewed explained a little of their own involvement in mindfulness practice – a large part of their commitment to the school's ethos and success. The Head has discussed her own practice publically and this models the school's approach to teaching and learning. A weekend retreat is planned for staff and community in September which is a new and excellent initiative.

Overall, it is a holistic approach and successful.”

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## **2. The establishment of clear procedures for monitoring staff performance and holding teachers to account on pupil progress as against standardised measures.**

Findings:

“Through observing lessons, book-looks, interviewing staff, holding small group and whole staff meetings, gaining samples of pupil voice, and communicating through pujas, email, blog, the Head has both set clear expectations of teachers and gained feedback on the quality of teaching. She has a very detailed view of the quality of teaching in all parts of the school. Her judgements on quality accorded with the reviewer's assessments.

The Head has now finalised the new Staff Appraisal process which has been introduced in INSET at the end of the spring term 2016. This initiative will begin in the summer term and will significantly address this ISI development area ensuring links to both the school's ethos and the Professional Standards. Additionally, Staff Surgeries have been already introduced by the Head to keep communication as strong as possible with staff.

Training has ensured that all staff are aware of standards and an emphasis on planning has ensured quality teaching. In addition, routes of feedback to the Head have ensured that teacher's requests are met eg ref staffing provision to meet pupils diverse needs...The new SEN tracker is particularly valuable in planning provision.”

“There has been a particular focus on behavioural management through ‘Behaviours for Learning’ to improve pupil progress which has been very successful and now a strength of provision. The process was modified to suit parental expectations in terms of consequences and repairing within the context of the precepts.

The use of past SAT papers provides assessment feedback in Maths...from September 2016 more detailed recording, assessment and tracking via ‘Tapestry’ will ensure the move to more effectively monitoring standards of teaching and pupil progress...”

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### **3. The quality of lesson planning to ensure appropriate sequences and challenge, especially for the most able.**

Findings:

“The quality of planning was found to be at least good and sometimes excellent. Teachers planned in depth in order to manage double year groups appropriately and within lessons there was ample evidence of differentiation and sometimes appropriate stretch for the most able...The advanced work of some Y4 pupils in Maths and the specific provision for two pupils in particular via SEN provision as well as the new tracking system for G&T were noted...”

“The two pupils interviewed, one from Y5 and one from Y6 were very happy with their lessons and how their teachers supported them and felt they were suitably engaged – which was also clearly evidenced in the excellent Y5/Y6 lesson. In Nursery and Reception, the planning of free-flow, child-initiated and adult-directed work, ensuring the coverage of the areas of learning and allowing the opportunity to engage many characteristics of learning was excellent particularly with an outstanding episode of blended child and adult directed learning in Nursery. This showed a deeply ingrained enquiry-based approach to helping the children understand the world. In Reception, good use is made of somewhat cramped conditions, and new plans are in hand to improve the access to outdoor space for the reception class – currently excellent for Nursery. In Y1 and Y2, the excellent maths lesson was planned and impressively delivered (and staffed) in five groups including one group working outdoors. In Y3&4 the pupils worked effectively in a good lesson with excellent features. The learning sequences and materials were adjusted to allow for individual pupil response. In Y5 and Y6 the pupil outcomes were excellent and sufficient scope was available and individual pupils appropriately challenged. Overall, pupils were engaged and progressed in lessons. The excellent support of the SEN teacher is noted here as a key influence on planning and provision for all staff. The plans for a new Sensory Room from September 2016 are very exciting...”

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### **4. The use of assessment practices to teach more responsively and support all pupils.**

Findings:

The Head has worked hard with staff to establish a new way forward to ensure a coherent approach to assessment benchmarked to appropriate national standards in terms of internal assessment and tracking. A review questionnaire on Assessment, Recording and Marking was completed and extended discussions have agreed that ‘Tapestry’ will provide what the school needs with regard to improving assessment in terms of learning journals and tracking progress. As already noted, this is being introduced across the school in September 2016. Additionally, a new Formative Assessment tracking sheet has been introduced. EYFS is monitoring the government announcements on the possible introduction of Early Excellence for Baseline assessment in reception...”

“Within lessons, all staff were clearly planning on the basis of previous learning and ensuring that pupils were working at an appropriate level. There were frequent references to previous work and all lessons included learning intentions ensuring the children knew where they had been, where they were and where they were aiming for in their learning. Teachers were observed making adjustments to provision for individual pupils and small groups showing appropriate flexibility in response to pupil progress...”

“...Marking is on the agenda and was included in the teacher questionnaire in Autumn 2015. The use of pink (‘tickled pink’) and green (‘growth required’) is noted as a valid approach and further consolidation will be beneficial. Levels of teacher voice, target setting, self and peer assessment are not yet consistently used although some excellent practice was noted in some classes – eg that the children self-evaluated their learning using a number scale and pre-prepared grids in Y3/Y4 and that individual target sheets are completed in Y1 and Y2 where ELGs are also a guiding factor for Y1 in the Autumn term. The Assessment and Marking Policy is useful, and includes many good exemplars...”

ENDS