Calow Church of England (V.C.) Primary School

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Key Information

Assessment Type	Review
Assessor Name	Robert Haywood
Visit Date	19th May 2011
Assessment Reference Number	ENQ – 81502 - STTPSC

Conclusion

Calow Church of England (V.C.) Primary School continues to meet the Core Standard.

Assessor Name: Robert Haywood
Investors in People Specialist

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Executive Summary

1. The school continues to meet the requirements of the Core Standard and the many strengths would have certainly resulted in additional Bronze recognition had this been a planned objective.

2. Of the many strengths of the school, the following are worthy of highlight:

- The strong set of core values and Christian ethos which underpin all that the school does so that pupils enjoy coming to school, enjoy their learning and experience success and achievement;
- The quality of leadership and governance and the trust in school leadership;
- Leadership and management capacity building through the extended leadership team;
- The quality of staff learning and development planning and delivery;
- The engagement of pupils in decision making leading to a UNICEF award;
- The commitment and dedication of the whole staff team towards high standards of provision and outcomes for all groups of pupils;
- The strong engagement of the school in the church and wider community;
- The very high level of staff morale;
- Sub-contracted staff in catering and site roles feeling part of the team;
- The whole staff team believing that the school is a great place to work.

Review methodology

Calow Church of England (V.C.) Primary School is a small school in the village of Calow in Derbyshire. The review comprised:

- One day on-site conducting interviews with a high proportion of staff, plus the Chair of Governors and two student members of the School Council;
- Interviews with sub-contracted staff in catering and site functions who impact upon the quality of provision;
- Scrutiny of documentation such as the School Development Plan and the Staff Professional Development Plan;
- A closing/feedback meeting with the head teacher.

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Principle: Developing strategies to improve the performance of the organisation

Indicators 1 to 4

Indicator 1: A strategy for improving the performance of the organisation is clearly defined and understood.

The school has a clear strategy for improving its performance based upon a good understanding of its development needs. The head teacher has the support of an enthusiastic leadership team and governors who share his ambition for continual improvements in provision for all pupils. Practice at the school is driven by a set of core values and the belief that offering pupils a broad range of experiences will enable them all to experience success and develop their confidence. People said:

"Our values and collective worship are taken seriously…"
"Learning here includes the spiritual and moral…"
"The success of our pupils is our priority."

Documentary evidence and interviews with school leaders, staff and governors revealed that the school's improvement strategy has arisen from:

- understanding of the requirements of the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda;

- careful analysis of pupil performance and benchmark data;

- careful on-going self-evaluation using the revised Ofsted framework Self Evaluation Form (SEF);

- a good understanding of the national development agenda including community cohesion;

- discussions with governors, staff, parents and pupils;

- discussions with Local Authority school improvement professionals.

The School Development Plan (SDP) provides the rationale for the improvement agenda for the school and contains the school's vision and aims, development priorities (with associated action plans), and success criteria against which to measure progress and impact. Subject plans are included in the SDP and are monitored regularly, and progress is reported to governors.

The involvement of staff in the School Development Plan (SDP) and consultation with governors ensures that the plan is widely owned and understood. Interviews with staff and governors confirmed this process and people are clear on the school's aims and priorities and their role in helping to achieve them. Relationships between staff and governors are strong:

"We have very good relationships with our governors…they are supportive and positive, but they don't pull any punches."

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Pupils are regarded as key stakeholders by the school and student voice is taken very seriously. The School Council are involved in consultations about school practice and take an active role in staff selection. The involvement of students is of such quality that the school has achieved a UNICEF award. Two members of the school council were included in the interviews (informally over lunch), and they proved to be very good ambassadors for the school. They said:

"We like being able to help our school…"
"We like helping to choose our teachers."

Indicator 2: Learning and development is planned to achieve the organisation's objectives.

The school invests well in its people. The main staff learning and development priorities in the Professional Development Plan are allied to the SDP. For example:

- raising standards of attainment in mathematics at Key Stage 2;
- implementation of the Learning Platform;
- training for staff in special educational needs issues such as 'Active Maths'

Individual learning and development needs are elicited from performance management and frequent discussions to ensure that they match the requirements of the school and personal development agendas. Staff can also talk to the head teacher about their learning and development needs, and staff spoke of their receptiveness to such conversations. The head teacher also invests in learning to build the capacity of his staff team and encourages the acquisition of professional qualifications and management competence - some good examples were revealed during the interviews such as Masters degrees and NVQs.

The head teacher and staff are able to explain the learning and development needs of the school and for their subjects and/or areas of work respectively. They also explained that use is made of the following strategies to develop people:

- training – internal and external events;
- induction with on-going coaching and mentoring as required;
- frequent meetings where classroom staff discuss practice and issues;
- formal observation of practice and feedback;
- pupil work scrutiny and feedback to teachers;
- subject leaders advising colleagues on how to develop their practice;
- joint review sessions with governors;
- self-review processes which provide feedback on pupil performance and progress, the quality of leadership and management and other performance measures;
- informal sharing of practice.

All groups of staff can give examples of their learning and development and how they were "keeping up-to-date". The head teacher is clear that in order to achieve school objectives, staff development has to be tied to them and the impact of this investment needs to be evaluated against success criteria such as pupil progress targets. All staff are able to describe how they are involved in identifying their learning and development needs. People said:

"I can talk to the head teacher if I want to attend a course."

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"We discuss our training needs during our performance management reviews."

The detailed 'Professional Development Plan' ensures that planned actions are implemented, monitored and evaluated against clear success criteria.

Indicator 3: Strategies for managing staff are designed to promote equal opportunity in the development of the organisation's staff

The head teacher described the range of strategies that the school has in place to encourage staff to contribute their ideas using processes such as staff and team meetings and informal day-to-day discussions. Interviews with staff confirmed this and examples were given. Staff said:

"We can share our ideas in staff meetings"
"The head teacher asks us for our ideas in staff and one-to-one meetings."
"All people here are utterly able to make suggestions and give ideas...the head teacher listens."

Staff questioned about their performance management reviews confirmed that these present an opportunity to discuss a range of ideas and learning and development needs. People said:

"Yes, I have discussed my ideas with my team leader during my performance review."
"I'm very happy to share my ideas...we all do...and support each other."

Senior leaders recognise the different development needs of various groups of staff and individuals to learn and develop to meet the improvement needs of the school, and assist individuals with gaining new skills and qualifications. All people interviewed could give examples of recent learning and development and confirmed that equal opportunities to learn and develop exist in the school. When questioned on the commitment to training and development, all staff indicated that their needs were met and that the head teacher encouraged people to attend training events. The head teacher's commitment to learning and development was viewed as a positive aspect of working at the school.

As a result of leadership and management actions, all groups of staff feel involved in the life of the school and feel consulted and valued, reinforcing the belief that the school has an inclusive culture.

Indicator 4: The capabilities of managers need to lead, manage and develop staff effectively are clearly defined and understood

The head teacher and staff team are united in their drive to continue to improve pupils' progress and ensure that their broader personal development is enriched. The school has a relatively large leadership team and people have been invited to join it to gain valuable experience. The head teacher also views this as an opportunity to build leadership and management capability within his school and demonstrate his commitment to distributed leadership. Leadership is further extended to include responsibility for subject leadership such as Religious Education for example. Subject leaders were questioned on the nature of their role and the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to be effective in the role, and they were able to give a good account of each aspect mentioning:

"Having good subject knowledge"
"Being a good communicator"
"Being confident in giving feedback to colleagues on their practice"

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"The ability to share good practice with others, being able to give examples and ideas of how things can be improved"
"Quality assurance is a key aspect of the role."
"Having a vision and passion for your subject."

Staff are able to describe what their leaders/managers should be doing to lead, manage and develop them effectively and gave examples:

"Good leaders should point the way and be good role models"
"They should develop the staff".
"They should be good communicators and care for their people."
"They should have high expectations and challenge us"
"They should be approachable, listen to ideas and views but also know what they want."

All staff are very complimentary about the leadership and management of the school and confirmed that high levels of trust existed in the capability of the head teacher to lead the school and do the right things.

Principle: Taking action to improve the performance of the organisation

Indicators 5 to 8

Indicator 5: **Managers are effective in leading, managing and developing staff.**

Leaders/managers are able to explain how they are effective in leading, managing and developing staff. For example, senior and subject leaders were able to give numerous examples of how they lead and develop staff by:

- working with staff to make improvements in rates of pupil progress and improve attainment in core subjects;
- leading in line with the core values;
- delegating responsibilities to subject leaders to develop practice within the school;
- providing advice on effective teaching and learning using the Ofsted criteria for good and outstanding lessons;
- providing feedback from classroom observations to improve teaching and learning skills;
- the use of meetings and briefings to keep staff well informed of developments and day-to-day information needs;
- running in-house training;
- providing informal support for colleagues to deal with issues and challenges;
- monitoring pupils' work and providing feedback to colleagues;
- making   performance management reviews a positive and developmental experience;
- coaching and mentoring colleagues to develop their practice.

Senior leaders and subject leaders mentioned that they provide feedback to staff via:
- Lesson observations;
- Scrutiny of pupils' work;

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- Performance management reviews;
- Looking at planning;
- Feedback via meetings;
- One-to-one discussions;
- Informal feedback.

Staff said that they received sufficient feedback via these methods and had a strong sense that they are doing a good job:

"My feedback has been very professional, positive and supportive."
"I've had lots of feedback, thanks and praise…I feel appreciated."
"I get feedback almost every day….I feel confident that I am doing a good job"

Indicator 6: Staff's contribution to the organisation is recognised and valued.

Senior staff gave examples of how they recognise and value people's contribution via:

- Performance management reviews
- asking people to take on additional, or new roles and responsibilities;
- feedback via meetings;
- group or one-to-one discussions.

Interview data confirmed these processes and people were asked questions about the climate and culture of the school, and their morale. In response people said:

"My morale is very high...I love it here."
"The people here are very friendly and I enjoy it...I can't think of any improvements"
"I love working at this school…it's a lovely place to work."
"I don't want to work anywhere else"
"We all get on extremely well."
"I work with fabulous people…I love my job."
"I have good relationships with all people in the school."

Morale is very high across the school and people said that the climate was friendly and supportive. Everyone stated just how much they like working with children and helping them to learn and develop in line with the school's values and aims.

All staff are very clear on their roles and contribution to the school. For example:

- the school administrator who is growing rapidly in her new job and knows that she has several key functions within the school, including financial management;
- teaching assistants who see themselves as central in terms of supporting learning and teaching, supporting pupils with additional learning needs, supporting the personal well-being of pupils and helping the school to raise attainment;
- lunchtime supervisors who could clearly explain their role in relation to the safety and well-being of children at lunchtime.

Staff spoke with confidence about their impact on the school's aims and objectives.

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Indicator 7 Staff are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility by being involved in decision-making

The leadership shown by the head teacher to involve staff in decision-making is a strength of the school – the head teacher displays consultative and democratic styles of leadership. Staff said:

"The head brings his ideas to meetings and asks staff what they think."
"Our leadership team meetings are genuinely consultative."
"The head teacher knows what he wants but he takes time to discuss things with us."

As a consequence of improved delegation and higher personal accountability, staff feel trusted to do their job(s) whilst knowing that they are responsibility for the quality of their work. One colleague said:

"I feel trusted to get on and do my work… I have responsibility for the quality of it."

Having said this, people feel able to consult the head teacher and ask for advice about their work, problems they are trying to resolve, or on their thinking about how they can make things better. More than one person said that the head teacher is:

"Very approachable and you can discuss issues with him"

The devolvement of leadership has been woven into the performance management system and training/development systems, so that performance and practice issues are addressed in a focused and structured way. For example, the opportunities for teaching assistants to develop their role and practice has taken effect as they indicated that they now have more responsibility for their work in supporting teaching and learning.

As a consequence, staff are able to describe how they have taken more ownership and responsibility for a range of issues and could link this to their team/area of work and school improvement priorities.

Indicator 8: Staff learn and develop effectively

Learning and development is given high priority by the head teacher and he has created a positive learning climate for staff, encouraging them to participate in a range of training courses and learning activities. The range of learning and development activities cited in Indicator 5 above were confirmed by staff interviews.

Performance management records contain entries for learning and development and these are analysed by leaders. The head teacher and his senior colleagues also keep learning and development needs under review. Where the learning needs can be met from internal sources this is achieved through staff meetings, one-on-one support or school training (INSET) days.

Those interviewed are able to describe their learning, how it has been applied and what impact it is having on provision and performance. For example, staff spoke of developing their understanding and skills in maths and ICT and how it was improving their planning and work in the classroom.

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Staff new to the school are able to explain their induction and how they were helped to settle-in and become effective as soon as possible. One colleague said:

"The induction programme is very helpful and helped me to become established quite quickly, though I am still learning."

The induction of new governors has also been revised and three new governors have been trained to ensure that they are aware of Safeguarding requirements. Governors also mentioned the training and support programmes in place to help them fulfil their obligations and do a good job as the 'critical friends' of the school.

Principle: Evaluating impact on the performance of the organisation

Indicators 9 & 10

Indicator 9 Investment in staff improves the performance of the organisation

The school uses a mix of processes to evaluate the impact of school improvement and investment in staff learning and development. The use of the Ofsted Self-Evaluation Framework [SEF] demonstrates the school's commitment to evaluation being centred upon how it is developing its practice, and how its recent actions have been improving its performance: this work is on-going. This is monitored by the School Improvement Partner who uses Local Authority QDD process in parallel to the Ofsted Framework to challenge the school leadership and reach accurate self-assessment scores.

The head teacher and staff are able to elaborate upon the aspects of the school's overall investment in learning and development, for example:

- meetings to discuss improvements to practice account for several hours per individual teacher and teaching assistant;
- performance management accounts for a significant investment of time from team leaders and job holders;
- the budget set aside for external courses;
- leadership time has been invested in lesson observations and work scrutiny with additional time added for feedback to each individual;
- the five school-based INSET days;

The head teacher was able to cite examples of how the investment in staff learning and development has improved provision and outcomes for pupils. For example, the allocation of leadership time to lesson observations, feedback and discussion had led to some improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Also, the use of FFT predictors had led to expectations of a reversal of last year's dip in pupil attainment in maths and English at the end of Key Stage 2.

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Indicator 10 Improvements are continually made to the way staff are managed and developed.

The head teacher and staff are able to give examples of how the on-going evaluation of the school's investment in people has resulted in some improvements in the strategy for managing and developing them. Some examples of improvements made are:

- Induction for staff and governors;

- Improvements to arrangements for supporting trainee teachers;

- Extending the school's leadership team to build capacity.

The value of extending the leadership team is reaping rewards and the most recent members spoke well of the opportunities it was providing for them in terms of understanding school leadership challenges.

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Appendix 1 – Continuous Improvement Plan

Areas for Continuous Improvements and / or Areas for Action Plan	Activity	Support from (e.g. Assessor / Centre / Other)
Consider the next review against the additional evidence requirements for Bronze or Silver and budget for this well in advance. The school can demonstrate that it operates above the Core standard and this should help it should it wish to apply for teaching school status in the next 2-3 years.	The Leadership Team to dedicate a meeting to discussing the full IiP Framework and reaching a consensus on the number of additional evidence requirements that it can meet.	The assessor can be part of this meeting to guide the school on the interpretation of particular issues such as social responsibility.

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Appendix 2 – Assessment results summary

The Investors in People Framework

The Evidence Requirements

The Indicators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																							
2	✓	✓	✓	✓																									
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																								
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6	✓	✓	✓																										
7	✓	✓	✓																										
8	✓	✓	✓																										
9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓																								
10	✓	✓	✓																										

The number of evidence requirements met is 39

Key:

[purple box] The Core Investors in Staff Standard

[yellow box] Your Choice from the IIP Framework

[hatched box] Not part of the Investors in Staff Framework

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