

Basic Skills Quality Mark Programme – Visit Feedback Report

School name	Thorp Primary		
Headteacher	Mr. Stuart Bennett		
School and/or HT email	info@thorp.oldham.sch.uk	Tel no	0161 7705 475
Alliance QM Assessor	Mrs. Chris Barsby	Visit date	31/03/2015

Purpose of Visit	Renewal
-------------------------	----------------

The assessor spoke with the following people

Headteacher and/or Senior Leaders YES	Literacy Subject Leader YES	Numeracy Subject Leader YES	Assessment Manager YES
SENCo YES	Pupil representatives YES	Governor representative(s) YES	Parent representative(s)

'Learning Walk' completed? YES	Relevant evidence-base reviewed? YES
---------------------------------------	---

There were no points for development given or agreed the last renewal, which reflected the school's outstanding status at the time.
--

- Agreed areas for development in preparation for the next Quality Mark visit:**
- continue the work to ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress and that the gap between disadvantaged and other pupils continues to narrow (Elements 2,3, 10)

 - continue to ensure that teachers plan effectively within the revised National Curriculum (NC), assess accurately and give feed back to pupils which enables them to improve their work and make good or better progress (Elements 2,3, 10)

 - further develop the skills of middle leaders in supporting and monitoring the learning and teaching of basic skills (Element 10)

Thorp Primary is an average sized school where most pupils are of white British heritage and the population is very stable. Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with skills which are broadly average when compared to national figures, although there are some with levels of skill which are below average.

After the last BSQM renewal, the school went through a period of difficulty which saw end-of Key Stage 2 SATs scores dipping from significantly above average to average in 2012 and below average in 2013 (although high standards at KS 1 were maintained). Various factors contributed to this picture, but when the school was inspected in summer 2013 it was judged to require improvement. This triggered a very energetic response even before the report was published, with the school's leaders and governors putting in place uncompromising plans for improvement. This was followed in 2014 with some very effective work which resulted in overall attainment in Key Stage 2 SATs once again statistically significantly above national scores and Year 1 phonics test scores of 100%, putting the school in the top 2% of schools nationally. There was also a significant turnover of staff during this time and this academic year (2014/15) started with 5 newly appointed teachers/leaders including a new very knowledgeable and experienced deputy headteacher (DHT) who holds the INCO/SENCO post (inclusion and special educational needs). Leaders report a "can do / will do" attitude towards change among staff members: leaders report that morale is at a high level and this is tangible when talking to staff and pupils.

The school now judges itself to be good and this has been externally endorsed, although it still awaits an imminently expected judgement under section 5.

'Good practice' identified in relation to the 10 Elements of the Quality Mark:

Elements 2, 3, 1 & 10 (the elements relating to assessment and expectations; planning; monitoring and evaluating impact).

The school has made many significant improvements within the above 4 Basic Skills Quality Mark (BSQM) elements since the time of the last renewal assessment. A new, internally designed pupil tracking system is now fully in operation and understood by all staff. It is updated every half term (previously once a term) from teacher assessment and the results analysed and discussed with the headteacher, SEN/D and assessment leaders and the class teacher. The discussion focuses on what has been successful in bringing about pupils' good progress and strategies for accelerating that of pupils at risk of slowing down. Because of the rigour and frequency of the meetings they are evaluative and focused, and have ensured measurable progress and improvement.

The governor who took part in the renewal assessment spoke about the varied experience and expertise among the Governing Body and how this helps them to understand all aspects of the school's work and support and challenge leaders appropriately.

Because her ministry work at Trinity Methodist Church allows her time during the day to visit school, she has developed pastoral and educational roles which involve regularly leading collective worship in school, talking to pupils about religious matters and listening to pupils reading. She commented on the high morale that has been very evident in school for some 12 months. Her unique position means that she can report to the Governing Body and help bring to life other information which is presented to them.

Alliance for Lifelong Learning

enquiries@am-alliance.co.uk



www.am-alliance.co.uk

Elements 4 & 5 (the elements relating to under-attainment and/or underachievement)

The recently appointed deputy headteacher is the leader for inclusion and special educational needs. She is very experienced in the both roles having held these posts in another school. She keeps her own continuing professional development (CPD) up-to-date through reading, liaising with other SENCOs and attending national conferences.

The needs of most pupils are addressed through first teaching. Eighty-five per cent of teaching was good or better by July 2014 with no inadequate teaching. This improvement has been brought about by teachers' increased high expectations of pupils' progress (through training and/or in-school mentoring) and developmental feedback from frequent observation by senior leaders. Monitoring indicates that this percentage is rising as the year progresses. For those pupils whose needs cannot be fully met by first teaching there is a variety of bespoke provision, mainly taught by well trained and well managed teaching assistants. Pupils on the SEN/D register at Thorp have diverse needs and so do not readily fall into groups. Their specific needs are assessed through the procedures in place in school and with the support of an educational psychologist and medical input where relevant.

Pupils drawing down Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) benefit from a teacher on a 0.6 contract.

The main challenge for the school is financial: small numbers of disadvantaged pupils draws down proportionately less funding than schools with higher numbers of these pupils and so it cannot make economies of scale. However, leaders and governors are ensuring that funding is allocated and used appropriately to ensure that there is equality of opportunity and this is impacting positively on the progress of vulnerable groups of pupils.

Elements 6, 7, 8 (the elements relating to teaching and learning)

The section 5 inspection prompted an audit of the continuing professional development (CPD) needs of teachers, teaching assistants and governors which has fed into performance management and school improvement planning. Support for this has come from different sources ranging from individual support for teachers from within school to middle leaders benefiting from a nationally accredited course. The Local Authority (LA) and independent consultants have also played their role and the results of this intense level of support and development is evident when talking to staff and walking around school.

One of the major developments is the highly visual calculation policy which is prominent in classrooms from Year 1 to Year 6 which sets out a clear progression in the teaching of the 4 number operations. Leaders report that this is already impacting on pupils problem solving skills. All classrooms have literacy and numeracy boards: these are not "static" but clearly used during teaching. There is evidence of the use of ICT to support basic skills everywhere from EYFS to Year 6. The learning walk found the atmosphere in classrooms to be industrious and purposeful, with pupils who were enjoying some food technology work - the same learning activity in all year groups, but at an age-appropriate level.

The leadership of English is currently shared by the DHT and another senior leader. This is a temporary arrangement pending recruitment of a permanent post holder. Both leaders talked about the main work in English being the writing of a scheme of work, and the purchase, use and monitoring of new texts. Care has been taken to include many more "boy-friendly" books. Each class studies one author for the course of a year. Some books will be selected for interest and enjoyment and others to fit in with a topic.

The teaching of mathematics has undergone a radical change since the previous BSQM renewal with the complete abandonment of the page-by-page following of a commercially published

Alliance for Lifelong Learning

enquiries@am-alliance.co.uk



www.am-alliance.co.uk

resource. Now teachers plan from a scheme of work (adapted from a LA resource) with planning based on teachers' knowledge of pupils and carefully identified next steps in learning. Teachers use resources to help them to teach and their pupils to learn from a range of published and practical resources, including websites. Monitoring of the new calculation policy by the mathematics subject leader, which has involved observation of lessons, book scrutiny, pupil interviews and analysis of performance data, shows that it has had a very positive effect on progress and attainment and pupils' problem solving skills.

Two Year 6 pupils were formally interviewed during the assessment. They brought English and mathematics work books to talk about. The content of the work was very impressive, particularly the high level mathematics work, and both mathematics and English work was beautifully presented. Both pupils were modest when praised for this and cited their classmates' excellent presentation and handwriting skills. They spoke warmly about "their" author (Benjamin Zephaniah) and how much they enjoyed his poetry: the school had ensured that they knew something of the author in Year 5 in preparation for more depth of study in Year 6.

They also spoke about the helpful and developmental feedback they get from their teacher and the time they are given to act upon the advice given: they fully recognise that it is this which has been instrumental in getting them to a position to make an attempt for level 6 in 2015 SATs.

Element 9 (the element relating to the involvement of parents and carers)

Parents and carers are well informed through induction procedures, newsletters, homework diaries and the school's website. Parents are consulted regularly about their views. The school very much sees parents and carers as "partners in improvement" and to that end, ensures that there is plenty of information for them about the teaching of basic skills and how they can help most effectively help their children with these.

The school meets the 10 Primary Quality Mark elements well and I recommend that the award be granted for a further 3 years.

Thank you very much to Mr Stuart Bennett for his genuineness, his warm welcome and his flexibility about my timing requirements.

Thanks also to Miss Jenny Bowers and Mrs Kath Phillips for their openness about why and how things have changed since the last BSQM.

I am also grateful to governor Reverend Rachel Hope for her welcome input after leading collective worship on the assessment day.

Most of all I thank Holly and Joshua for representing the pupils of Thorp.

Alliance for Lifelong Learning