

Basic Skills Quality Mark Programme – Visit Feedback Report

School name	West End Academy		
Headteacher	Mr. Chris Johnson		
School and/or HT email	c.johnson@wcatrust.org	Tel no	01977 723705
Alliance QM Assessor	Mrs. Christine Barsby	Visit date	14.03.2016

Purpose of Visit **INITIAL ASSESSMENT**

The assessor spoke with the following people:

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

'Learning Walk' completed? YES	Relevant evidence-base reviewed? YES
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Agreed areas for development in preparation for the next Quality Mark visit:

- continue to develop pupils' ability to assess their own attainment and progress so that it helps them to identify next steps in learning rather than simply comment on current performance (Elements 2, 7)
- develop the use and application of grammar, punctuation and spelling (EGPS) to improve the quality of pupils' writing within all subjects in the curriculum (Element 7)

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

Context:

West End Primary became an academy in October 2013. A section 5 inspection in May 2015 removed it from special measures under the leadership of the current headteacher who was appointed in September 2014: it was judged to be good overall with outstanding leadership and outstanding pupil behaviour and safety.

Standards have risen during the last 18 months and are currently in line with national average. In terms of average points scores there are no differences in the level of attainment across the subjects, however further analysis has led the school to look closely at

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the teaching of reading, and grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Pupils make good or outstanding progress in basic skills during their time at West End.

Writing is a strength of the school with all Year 6 pupils in 2015 making the required progress by the end of Year 6 and a well above average percentage making more than the expected progress. All groups of pupils perform well in basic skills when compared with their groups nationally because of the school's well-implemented equal opportunities policy.

The school has been working towards the Basic Skills Quality Mark for almost 2 years and has taken that time to ensure and evidence that it is fully meeting all 10 elements and that this is impacting very positively on the its effectiveness.

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

The school has designed its own system for tracking and managing pupils' progress and attainment. This is based on analysis of the data collected from continuous teacher assessment and statutory testing. Very clear policies for the teaching of basic skills are in place and well understood by staff and clear lines of progression from year to year can be seen in pupils' reading, writing and mathematics books. Alongside this, clear guidance on what constitutes whether attainment is at the expected standard, or above or below that, helps teachers to assess accurately and identify pupils' next steps in learning. Their judgements have been externally affirmed through inspection, monitoring and regular moderation of work within school and with other schools.

Because pupils' progress and attainment is regularly discussed by teachers and leaders, they have a very clear understanding of what pupils know and understand and where there may be gaps. From observing his informal conversations with pupils during the initial assessment visit, it is very evident that the headteacher knows individual pupils throughout the school very well, including their ability levels, their personal learning targets and their needs and interests.

Leaders' approach to school development and improvement is very systematic. It follows well-planned, timetabled procedures for planning, monitoring, evaluating and sharing with appropriate stakeholders. Their expectations are high: every class teacher has personal targets relating to moving carefully selected pupils from below average attainment to average and from average attainment to above over the course of a year.

To support teacher assessment, leaders have trialled commercially published age-related tests in one year group but found that these overstated pupils' attainment. Teacher assessment is more accurate because systems for this are well established and well understood by staff and so the continued use of these particular tests is unlikely.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) an electronic assessment and tracking system is used (2Simple). Teachers and NNEBs work together to assess children's work. Age/stage posters are prominently displayed in the setting in order to keep expectations uppermost in practitioners' minds.

Marking and feedback is meticulous and consistent from the start. Comments in pupils' books indicating what they have done well, points for improvement and follow-up learning activities are indicated at first for the younger pupils pictorially then in writing at increasing length and sophistication as they get older. Pupils are given plenty of time to act on advice and have the support of their teacher whilst doing so. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils were seen during the BSQM assessment doing their "corrections" in mathematics and writing. This demonstrated

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how errors can (and do) become teaching points. Those with minor or few errors do a follow-up activity which challenges them.

Pupils are expected to evaluate their own work and also to offer their peers ways of improving their work. The use of learning objectives and success criteria has served very well to enable them to say what they or others have done well, however leaders want to develop the use of assessment grids and reflection sheets (and other techniques) which will involve pupils more in identifying next learning steps.

Reading is improving and attainment is currently in line with national average. The aim is to stretch all pupils so that they can make outstanding progress in reading and several strategies are being used to achieve this. Firstly, they read and use texts which challenge them and base activities in English and other subjects on these texts. This also serves the purpose of inspiring them to read the book for themselves or read other books by that author - the aim is to foster a love of reading. Reading is taught very systematically: all pupils have reading books and these show a clear progression in the acquisition of reading skills as pupils move up through the school. The English subject leader plans to improve guided reading practice - this is applied to pupils on a 1:1 basis so that their individual reading needs are fully met.

The development of mathematics as pupils move through the school is equally clear as that in reading and writing. This is because of the excellent strategic planning which guides teachers' individual planning for their classes. This, and attention to the "handing over" of classes to their next teacher at the end of the year ensures that each one understands what they are building on and what comes next. The mathematics subject leader is also the EYFS manager and is looking for more opportunities to do mathematics in the outside learning environment. She will eventually extend out-of-classroom mathematics to all year groups to promote using mathematics for real purposes. Last year she arranged a problem-solving day using an external provider. This proved very stimulating, with lots of ideas that the school can use to work towards this objective.

She also wants to improve the starting points in mathematics lessons to excite and interest pupils: this is well established in other subjects.

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

The current RAISEonline shows an improvement in performance in the Year 1 phonics test. Attainment is now in line with national average and this is partly due to extra teaching for Key Stage 1 pupils with disabilities and/or special educational needs (SEND). The underachievement of this group of pupils has decreased over the last 2 years and phonics test results are expected to rise again this year. Some Year 3 pupils who did not perform well in the test 2 years ago are still in receipt of some extra teaching, some with external help, to ensure there are no gaps in their phonics knowledge.

In Key Stage 2 leaders have focused on the improvement of EGPS, again an area which has shown improvement over the last 2 years but was not quite at the same level as reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2. Some pupils - not all of them with SEND, were at risk of underachieving and so measures to address this were applied to all pupils. The high profile that the teaching of EGPS has been given can be seen very clearly in classroom displays and in pupils' books: it is not simply taught as a "subject" but is very much used and applied to make writing more effective and more interesting. This is very clear in literacy books but not as well developed in other subjects, and is something the school will

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continue to address with vigour.

All SEND pupils have their own provision maps. These are monitored by the SENCO who also monitors the class work books to ensure that the skills and knowledge identified for improvement are being taught across the curriculum in different contexts.

Staff regularly evaluate the effectiveness of individual provision maps and must attach at least 5 pieces of the pupil's work to back up their judgements.

Everyone complies with the systems which are in place for guarding against the underattainment and underachievement of pupils and adheres to the non-negotiable practice expected and formats provided. These ensure consistency and simplifies monitoring and is proving very valuable in raising standards.

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

The continuing professional development (CPD) of staff is identified in a number of ways - from the analysis of data, from observation and discussion or from scrutiny of pupils' books. In this way whole-school needs and the needs of individuals go hand-in-hand and are very focused on the core subjects.

The effectiveness of teaching and learning is monitored and evaluated through formal observation, "drop-ins", scrutiny of pupils' books and pupil interviews. Newly and recently qualified teachers (NQTs, RQTs) receive a higher level of scrutiny and support than more experienced staff to ensure their teaching rapidly improves.

Much CPD is delivered via staff meetings which emphasises that it is the responsibility of all staff in raising standards in basic skills.

The learning walk revealed superbly organised and most attractive learning environments everywhere in school. Displays in classrooms emphasise the use and application of basic skills, for example Year 6 pupils are invited to use their reading skills to answer questions about Australia and their knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages to describe the playgrounds they designed. Displays are beautifully presented and support and/or celebrate learning across the curriculum. Displays are plentiful but well distributed so that each one has separation from the next to give clarity of purpose. Captions explain the learning intentions for pupils' work so that the emphasis on the use of basic skills is frequently re-stated.

This and the good and outstanding teaching throughout school impacts on pupils very positively. An industrious and purposeful atmosphere is found wherever pupils and adults interact. Well-established systems ensure that pupils know what to do and get down to work quickly. After completing their well-differentiated learning activities they tackle a "challenge" which gives them an opportunity to use and apply their knowledge.

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

Every effort is made to equip parents and carers with the skills and knowledge to support their children's education, particularly in basic skills. Newsletters, formal and less formal meetings and the website all play a part here. "Inspire" sessions are well attended, with parents working with their children in reading, writing and mathematics lessons.

The school meets the 10 Quality Mark elements very well, therefore I recommend that the Basic Skills Quality Mark be awarded for 3 years.

Thank you to headteacher Mr. Chris Johnson, his deputy Mrs. Rachael Carrigan, Trust Leader
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of Education Mrs. Danielle Johnson and SENCO Mrs. Sarah Brooks for their preparation and leadership of the BSQM initial assessment.
Thank you also to all pupils and staff at West End Academy for your very valued input.

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