

Potteries Educational Trust Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021

Annex 4: The Potteries Educational Trust School Improvement Strategy

0. Context

The Sixth Form College created, alongside Biddulph High School, the Potteries Educational Trust in September 2017 with the SFC as a full member and the High School an Associate Member in an 18-month provisional period.

This has led already to a range of improvements and positive impacts for staff and students.

Simultaneously, as part of the agreed outcome of the Area Review process for Staffordshire, the college and the Trust have been engaged in a series of Hub and Spokes partnership arrangements with local and regional high schools. We have signed 8 memoranda of understanding committing the college and trust to provide a range of support for staff and students. This means we are actively engaged across the City in e.g. master classes, staff learning visits, peer review of subjects and faculties, staff sharing, sharing of TLA resources, Futures Programme events (providing experience of future careers linked to school subjects eg Science Olympics, Y Factor for Humanities, Media and Performing Arts events), school governance, intervention sessions for specific subjects and much more

1. What are the strategies that the trust will deploy to bring about improvement? Examples could include:

- ✓ Curriculum planning
- ✓ Strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- ✓ Monitoring strategies

The PET was created primarily in order to build a learning community of staff and students with the aim of being Outstanding. Since September 2017 we have built on the existing expertise at the college and Biddulph High School to create the following approaches and ways of working:

Improving Teaching and Learning

- A Trust wide teaching, learning and assessment group has been created under the leadership of the TLA leads at the college and the High School. This group has a key focus on:
 - ✓ Planning and delivering annual whole Trust and smaller scale TLA CPD events
 - ✓ Carrying out subject peer review – this year the focus is on Maths, English and Science – giving detailed reports back to SLT in each establishment on improvements needed with suggestions of what to carry out. This will be subsequently monitored

- ✓ Supporting the development of online sharing of TLA materials across the PET
- Two whole PET TLA CPD events have taken place as well as smaller scale Teachmeets and this pattern will continue. The focus of these events has been and will continue to be on the key PET TLA priorities established through the aggregation of formal learning walk and other institutional data. This year the priorities are: 'Challenge for all, Independent Learning, and Feedback'
- Professional learning communities have been established involving all teachers and meeting both within and across institutions. Each community focusses on an aspect of the three TLA priorities. This will continue into the future.
- In order to enhance expertise within the Trust to progress the aim of being Outstanding, external support has and will continue to be engaged, for example:
 - ✓ We have an informal arrangement with Lawrence Sherriff High School in Rugby who have carried out a review of A level English Literature and we in turn have provided support for them in setting up a level 2 and 3 Finance course
 - ✓ Good and outstanding sixth form colleges have and will continue to provide support in focussed peer review, provision of learning visits and resources for TLA eg Ashton Sixth Form College for Business, Media and Physics
 - ✓ If necessary we will employ external consultancy as needed in a focussed way eg MEI was commissioned to support staff in their delivery of resit Maths courses, with funding for this partly sourced via the Maths Excellence Partnership in the City.
 - ✓ Curriculum Managers within the both the college and the school, have access to SASCAL Curriculum networks which enable sharing of resource, best practice and assessment moderation amongst subject leads across the city.
 - ✓ The college's involvement in the Opportunity Area English & Maths Resit Project will have a wider impact on collaborative T&L improvement, also benefitting Biddulph High School's students within the Trust.

Monitoring

- The PET has a system of faculty/subject quality boards after progress point data is available, involving subject leads, governors and trustees plus external experts in professional conversations about the data, gaps analysis and actions to improve. Work scrutiny and learning walks also occur. Subjects with weaker data have an even more intensive process. The process overall is rigorous but positive and has impact. Improvement is evident in progress made in the Level 3 Foundation year.

- In-year progress data is reviewed at SLT then LGB level, and then aggregated progress data is reviewed at the PET TLA Committee. Key issues are interrogated eg the performance by gender, particular whole Trust subject issues and this is then linked to planned actions and interventions.
- There are regular joint SLT meetings to review the progress and impact of PET activity and to discuss key issues and plan and agree joint actions.
- Senior Managers regularly visit each institution to listen, carry out learning walks and measure the impact of partnership work within the school or college.

Curriculum Planning

- Curriculum Assistant Principals meet formally and regularly to review curriculum, discuss proposed changes before taking to SLT for decisions based on the potential impact on student achievement and progression. For example, the Trust is piloting the new T Levels in Digital, having identified a local industry need and an interest in local students combined with a high level of staff expertise in Computer Science.
- Vocational provision is undergoing an evolution in the Trust as BTECs become part exam based, but we work as a Trust to support decisions for each institution – this has meant that Biddulph has maintained the existing BTECs whilst the SFC has moved to the new exam based system. Both decisions are based on logic and the needs of each institution following PET discussions.
- Joint staffing and staff sharing is being planned over time to manage small subjects and to preserve curriculum breadth. This as a significant advantage given the reduction in small sixth forms within the City, and enables preservation of subjects such as Music, German, Product Design, Further Maths.
- The PET starts from the position that its curriculum will be broad with a mix of A level, BTEC, Tech Level, T Level and level 2 provision across a wide range of subjects (over 50 at level 3). All planning decisions are made on this basis. It has meant that Biddulph High School is able to continue to preserve this breadth of offer in their sixth form in the long-term.
- The curriculum has been aligned into pathways at the SFC linked to vocation eg STEM, Education, Society and Health, Business, Finance and Law etc. These also align to the six schools at Staffordshire University where the bulk of PET students progress to. Over time we will seek to map and where sensible align pathways within the PET as a whole, whilst preserving the integrity and focus of the local offer in each institution.

- Data, student voice, local employer and university needs all influence the curriculum design – for instance, we have introduced a level 3 Foundation programme to support young people with only two GCSE grade 4s to give them 4 new GCSEs and then progression to level 3 study. Again, following student feedback we have added qualifications in finance and also in Applied Biology and Criminology to support student progression and achievement.
- Level 4 provision, franchised via Staffordshire University and staffed across the PET is enabling students who under-achieve at level 3 to progress to higher education. The courses are mapped to local employment needs eg in Medical Sciences, Business, Media and Journalism.

2. What specific **strategies** does the trust propose to use **to improve achievement of disadvantaged students?**

The Sixth Form College has a large proportion of disadvantaged students (approximately one third of the student body) while at Biddulph High School approximately one quarter of the students are DL. Therefore, we start from the premise that we will design, implement and monitor all teaching and learning to focus on the needs of students without a background of parental support, low resource for study at home, limited cultural capital and in many cases low aspiration.

- Effective curriculum planning and study programmes combined with high quality IAG enable students to choose appropriate courses at KS4 and KS5. The ability at KS5, for students in the PET to study mixed A level and BTEC programmes has enabled 65% of all BTEC students to progress to university. Many of these students are disadvantaged. Similarly, 43% of year 11 students in receipt of pupil premium have progressed in to the sixth form at Biddulph High School, testament of the Trust's priority to improve achievement of disadvantaged students.
- Effective tracking and monitoring of students mean interventions are targeted for individual students and groups of students. Some of these are subject specific with differentiated support for those from more disadvantaged backgrounds with often-lower parental support or experience of level 3 education for instance. This means students are treated as individuals without stigmatising them.
- Mentoring support – role models from year 12 are used to provide support for students at KS4 and below. This has been used for a number of years now by SFC

and Biddulph High School and is highly effective in building resilience and ambition.

- A work readiness programme, 'Workskills', for disadvantaged and less able students at Biddulph High School to enable meaningful progression for these students beyond Year 12.
- A student performance management system which varies at each institution but has the same elements of repeated and reinforced praise as well as sanctions when needed. We ensure that disadvantaged students are well represented in those being praised, given commendations etc.
- Parental engagement – the PET works actively to engage parents of disadvantaged students using a variety of approaches – online engagement, celebration event invitations, shows and performances involving their children, praise comments sent home, early supportive engagement when issues are starting to arise – helping provide advice in parenting etc.
- Building cultural capital and skills development activities to raise self-confidence, leadership skills, resilience and aspiration. These are a priority for all students, but especially targeted at students from disadvantaged backgrounds and include:
 - ✓ Theatre visits for GCSE Maths resit students (200 of these annually)
 - ✓ Outward bound day courses and residential visits
 - ✓ Special groups for young people with autism to provide targeted activities to help engage them in learning – the bulk from disadvantaged backgrounds
 - ✓ Embedded local and national business sessions within schemes of work and with carefully selected young people for particular aspects of the activities. This is used for all students, but activities are designed to support disadvantaged students' achievement. For example many of these students struggle with presentation skills necessary in all subjects and so in say Business classes students have to do a formal presentation to the class in business dress which is critiqued by students and business people. This develops confidence and self-esteem leading to higher achievement.
- Staff CPD on approaches to build resilience in particular as well as independent learning for all students but with an element of focus on disadvantaged students.
- Student voice – careful gathering of student input from across subjects and student groups which is routinely analysed by subject and student group to inform subjects and teachers regarding the efficacy of TLA strategies for each sub group. This is then used to adjust approaches within the classroom
- The Trust has common, embedded approaches to Safeguarding which support and enable all students to stay in education and achieve.

- The curriculum across the PET is deliberately inclusive to support all learners. Teachers and the curriculum adapt to take into account the different cultural and educational needs of all students to support them to achieve, including disadvantaged learners, learners with low and high prior attainment and learners with disabilities and learning difficulties.

3. Track Record of school improvement

The strategic deployment of senior managers as school governors has enabled strong links based on trust whilst also ensuring college managers have a clear understanding of school improvement strategies. College and Biddulph High School staff continue to work in supportive intervention across the region in a range of schools and have been doing so for some years. The strategies employed will continue and expand within the Trust. Examples of intervention:

- Entire year 11 support for an entire day in Trentham academy in English, Maths and Science. This has been supported with further work in for example Business Studies providing master classes for students and CPD for staff as well as periodic master classes and other activity. The impact in English, Maths and Science is clear in this year's KS4 data.
- A term's worth of intervention in year Business for St Peter's Academy students last Spring as well as student Maths mentors linked to academy numeracy days. The feedback from the school has been impressive.
- Participating in faculty reviews at St Peter's Academy and providing detailed feedback for SLT at the school on actions needed to improve in those areas eg in science most recently.
- Numerous dance and performing arts master classes run by college students in local schools with in some cases quite challenging students. This has been used to help build motivation and confidence levels amongst these students
- Computer science and sport master classes amongst others in Excel Academy this academic year to support improvements in achievement.
- A wide variety of master class and other activity at Co-operative Academy, Stoke on Trent.
- The college has secured the role as HE+ hub for the West Midlands, and with support from the Opportunity Area, the trust is leading on a City-wide High Achievers programme which means the Trust, in conjunction with Cambridge, and other prestigious universities, is running a programme to support able students across the region, thus supporting improvement within schools. Staff from Biddulph High School are taking the lead on this High Achievers programme which provides valuable support for Trust and North Staffordshire students as

well as staff development and the opportunity to challenge and retain good staff within the PET.

- A range of master classes, staff development, inspirational events and activities for Thistley Hough Academy staff and students over a period of several years.
- Whole year group motivational assemblies for year 11 – college staff carried these out for the entire City from the 2015-16 academic year, and continue to do so across Stoke on Trent.
- The PET has signed a memorandum of understanding with United Endeavour Trust (one of their schools is a key feeder for the SFC) and after some preliminary work in 2017-18 is now starting to work in a planned and collaborative fashion with their staff and students – providing master classes, access to Science Olympics, Y Factor event for Humanities, staff CPD, support for transition from KS4 to KS5, support for science etc. There is a detailed three-year action plan which will be monitored termly and reported to trustees/LGBs. The impact of this should start to be felt this year but is likely to take the three years of the plan to be significant.

The strategy is to identify areas each school needs intervention support in, staff training or student aspiration raising and to provide a bespoke package for each one. This will continue within the PET as it grows, utilising the growing expertise and capacity this brings.

College staff regularly support colleagues across the region in developing their practice, sometimes at the invitation of Ofsted inspectors. The most recent support was for King Edward's Nuneaton in the Autumn Term to advise on how to improve their GCSE provision – the impact will be felt this summer.

Within the PET the TLA team has provided focused feedback to SLT in each institution regarding necessary improvements and individual subject teams have shared resources and approaches to TLA, observing each other's practice and implementing changes to classroom delivery. There has been a positive impact on Biddulph High School's progress data in one year, in part through the support of the PET. The main support from High School to the college in year one of the Trust has been towards GCSE support which has shown continued improvement as the data shows.

The wider activity of the PET in raising aspiration is now showing in progression data post school and college with increasing numbers applying to study at top institutions. This will continue further as the Trust grows.

4. Capacity

- Who are the individuals involved in the trust's SI work? Does the trust have the capacity to release the human resources required? Who coordinates their deployment?
- What will the impact and specific outcome of their deployment be and how will it be measured?
 - ✓ The Trust has a cross Trust TLA team whose focus is on staff CPD, monitoring and subject review. As each new school joins a selection process will identify individual subject specialist to join this team giving natural growth in both capacity and expertise.
 - ✓ The work is overseen by a dedicated quality administrator and the two TLA SLT members at both institutions
 - ✓ Because the college has long experience of school improvement and interventions across the City there are no issues in having sufficient resource and expertise for the work across a broad pool of specialist staff, added to and enriched by each school that joins the PET.
 - ✓ Separate support is planned and provided regularly for middle to develop their practice eg Biddulph High School provides an accredited post-grad course via Staffordshire University for middle leaders available to the whole Trust.
 - ✓ Specific support for science CPD and science staff upskilling is delivered through the Science Learning Centre for North Staffordshire which is now based at the Trust headquarters on the University Quarter. This separate resource is funded by the government via STEM Learning.
 - ✓ The impact of deployment is intended to:
 - Improve staff expertise and confidence in planning and delivering learning as measured by learning walk, student voice and student progress data
 - Support the development of middle leaders – measured via their performance management processes
 - Provision of targeted recommended actions to SLT at each institution – the impact is seen in revised subject quality improvement plans with the knock on positive impact on student data
 - Develop the staff on the team themselves so they can further progress within the PET – assessed via staff voice questionnaires as well as through their own performance management
 - As a result of the above we expect these actions to impact positively on the progress of students – as measured by progress data in-year

and at year-end, attendance and retention as well as progression beyond the institution data. For example, following the support to English resit GCSE at the SFC in 2017-18, achievement rates at grades 4 and above have risen from 25% to 50%. Following intervention with the Maths staff and students over a two year period, supported also by MEI, GCSE resit progress data has risen from around zero to + 0.12 in 2010 and now + 0.39.

- The attached PET Data Summary provides leaders and Governors within the college and school, and PET Trustees, with current starting points on which we will judge the efficacy of actions indicated in areas such as Value Added, Progression, Achievement Rates, Retention and Attendance. The approach of the Trust is that all interventions are monitored for impact and adjusted in light of evidence as necessary.

5. Finance

- How is school improvement funded?

The Trust pools resources to pay for school and college improvement – we evaluate total cost of the core package and share that cost. Additional targeted support as needed is paid from individual school budgets as a supplement to the core cost or top slice shared by all.

It is crucial to note that the most effective school improvement often comes from support and challenge from leaders within the MAT. There are areas of high performance across the potential partner organisations that could further drive up standards within the Trust schools.

6. Leadership and Governance

- Who has oversight of school improvement in the Trust Board

The Trust has a separate teaching, learning and assessment committee chaired by Kath Smith, a trustee and former Ofsted inspector. Michelle Johnston, also a trustee and a serving inspector also sits on the committee (although she is currently unwell but will return in the Autumn Term). Kath Smith thus has the strategic oversight and reports to the full Board.

Kath and also other trustees and governors routinely participate in the regular quality boards enabling a true picture of the nuances of individual subject issues and strategies to improve.