

Thank you for contacting the school and sharing your concerns. We hope the following information will be useful and allow for a constructive dialogue regarding your child between you and the school in the coming months.

Driffield School joined The Education Alliance five months ago and the trust and school appreciate the collection of views you have sent us. The issues you have raised are many and varied and they reflect a number of the areas that this term's action plan has been addressing; quality of provision (in the short term focused on examination groups); securing the long term viability of the school and recruiting and maintaining a stable and healthy workforce. From September, the focus will be on students' pastoral care; teaching and learning; teachers' professional development; communication and monitoring standards. We are looking forward to working with students, parents and staff now that we have a more secure platform, in relation to staffing and finances. We are also looking forward to the summer results following the extra work that the students have undertaken over the last five months.

Staffing

The move by four members of staff to South Hunsley have been for the following reasons: one for promotion; two, because they live very close to the school and a fourth because of over staffing in the subject area at Driffield.

Following a national advert, Richard McDonald was appointed as Director of English relinquishing his post as Head of English at South Hunsley. This is a permanent full time appointment. A new Head of English has been appointed to his previous position at South Hunsley. We have appointed 11 teachers from outside the trust with 8 appointments in core subjects for Driffield, commencing in September 2017 and the timetable for September is fully staffed. The trust periodically keeps live adverts out for core subjects in an effort to future proof e.g. possible maternities etc. In addition to new appointments, Driffield School has received significant support from trust Directors of English, maths, science and SEN. This support will continue next year, along with additional input from School Improvement Leaders for English, maths and science.

The Ofsted report in 2016 judged the quality of teaching, learning and assessment as inadequate.



Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- There is too much variation in every aspect of teaching across most subjects. As a result, teaching does not lead to pupils making good progress.
- Methods used by teachers to check what pupils know and understand are variable and do not always identify how much progress pupils make. This is because leaders have not developed a systematic approach to checking if pupils make the progress they should to reach the expected standard for their age, especially in Key Stage 3.
- Not enough teachers create or use opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills across different subjects. Pupils are not encouraged to write to a good standard in subjects other than in English. Teachers in all subjects do not routinely correct spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. This slows the progress pupils make in these key skills.
- Most teaching of mathematics does not give the most-able pupils opportunities to develop the deeper understanding of concepts they need in order to reach high grades at GCSE. Neither does it give pupils who have special educational needs or disability the right guidance they need to make strong progress.
- Setting and marking of homework is variable. Some parents and pupils expressed concerns about some subjects' reliance on web-based learning which some pupils find difficult to access, although more than half of the parents who expressed their views are positive about homework.
- Pockets of stronger teaching are characterised by teachers using good relationships based on the detailed understanding of individual pupils to plan lessons that motivate and challenge them. Teachers' good subject knowledge means they use targeted questions and make sure pupils understand. As a result, pupils respond positively, show a keenness to learn and make better progress.

In the results in August 2015 and 2016, the school was shown to be in the bottom 30% of schools nationally for the progress of students. On the Raise Online Report in 2016, no strengths were identified and, in 4 key areas, the school was in the bottom 10% nationally. This suggests the quality of teaching has not been effective in recent years.

This term, all A level and GCSE staff have been given extensive support and training to teach their subjects and the new courses that have been brought in nationally. There are very few teachers who teach out of

their specialism. It is recognised good practice at A level to have 2 teachers delivering courses. It is also common in good schools in English and science at Key Stage 3 and 4 in order to ensure there are staff who teach to their areas of strength i.e. language and literature in English.

This term, the trust directors have been taking extra classes and leading extra sessions for Year 11 and 13. There have been joint trust revision sessions for Year 13 Chemistry and weekly lunchtime and after school sessions in science. Maths and English have run extra sessions, including Saturdays. 197 students attended the Saturday English session and in all three subjects, trust staff have led subject booster activities.

Teachers are also responsible for forms, which are allocated in the latter months of the academic year in readiness for September. The allocations will be shared with children once they are finalised.

Staff Health and Wellbeing

The Education Alliance is one of the only trusts in the region that meets with all the teaching and non-teaching unions each half term and works closely with them on issues around staff welfare and wellbeing. Classroom teachers work to a 1265 hours contract which is nationally recognised and is in line with guidance from teaching unions.

Recent activities linked to staff health and wellbeing include the following:

- The introduction of a staff suggestion scheme
- The delivery of a mindfulness programme
- The introduction of an employee assistance package which provides 24/7 access to confidential counselling, personal legal and financial information, health advice across a range of medical and wellbeing issues, and a GP helpline
- Implementation of a range of policies and procedures (e.g. Health and Wellbeing)
- Delivery of an Occupational Health Service provided by Hull City Council

We are going to undertake a staff survey in October 2017 across the trust and will work with the Board, Local Governing Bodies and trade unions to analyse the data and initiate appropriate actions in line with feedback, which will be anonymous. The intention is that the survey will then be undertaken on an annual basis.

Positive messages and achievements are celebrated every Monday morning in staff briefing and staff have organised staff sporting events, which have been popular.

Safeguarding

Ofsted judged that safeguarding was inadequate in 2016 but this has been followed by a very successful no notice visit by Ofsted that found safeguarding effective. The inspection was led by Mrs Dalton.

From a practical perspective, class registers are taken for every lesson within the first 5 minutes, so that any child who is missing can be reported straight away. There is a daily check of all registers to ensure they have been completed by every member of staff.

Behaviour

We are aware that The Education Alliance inherited an issue with poor behaviour at Driffield School and Ofsted judged behaviour to be inadequate. The lack of staff regularly on duty was also noted by Ofsted and had been brought to Ofsted's attention by students and parents.

All senior staff are now on duty at dinner time. Please be assured the school does not experience fights every day and the number of lunchtime incidents has fallen this term. Teaching staff cannot be directed to go on duty at lunchtime, although a number do so voluntarily. They can be directed to go on duty at break time as this sits in their 1265 hours contract.

An open door policy is in operation. Over the year, there have already been 446 learning walks (visits to classrooms which include book checks and discussions with students) and 7816 zonings from leaders (lesson drop-ins). Classrooms are visited on a planned basis throughout the week.

Driffield School has a Behaviour Policy that follows the model most good schools have, whereby the behaviour system is based on an escalation in sanctions. Students receive warnings but can be removed by on-call staff if a teacher feels they cannot teach with a particular student in their lesson. Where a student's behaviour is persistently disruptive and repeatedly stops other students from learning, sanctions are escalated.

Toilets are patrolled by duty staff. Unfortunately, the toilets are in poor condition due to age and lack of investment but the first set of toilets due for refurbishment will be done this summer. Staff toilets have not been refurbished.

Over the last few months, governors have issued final warnings to a number of disruptive students and, unfortunately, there have been two permanent exclusions. Prior to 2016 the school had a policy of no permanent exclusions but the Ofsted inspection showed that this did not lead to good behaviour in the school. Head of House, Deputy Head, Head of School and Governor warnings have had a measurable impact, with the number of warnings declining since the system was introduced.

The pastoral team now meets at the end of each school day to discuss any incidents and information is disseminated in a weekly pastoral bulletin to all staff. Any students who have accumulated behaviour points over the week are identified by the Heads of House and House Tutors and appropriate support is put in place. In the parent surveys conducted this year, 92% of parents who expressed a view said their child feels safe in school. This is in line with the 92% of secondary parents who agreed with that statement nationally. 91% of parents said their child is happy at the school, which is 2% above the national average for secondary schools.

Under Fair Access, Driffield School is legally bound to adhere to East Riding's Fair Access Policy, taking some students who have been excluded from other schools. The Fair Access Panel has directed one student to Driffield School this year. Any child who lives in the school catchment is legally entitled to a place. Information on Fair Access arrangements can be provided by the East Riding Local Authority.

The policy on uniform and mobile phones has been communicated on a regular basis. The last letter on uniform was May 2017 and we ask all parents to support this policy.

Health and Safety

Prior to transfer of the school to The Education Alliance, the Local Authority assessed that the school buildings needed £5 million spending on them to bring them back to a good standard. The Alliance has not received any money to do this but will be putting in a Condition Improvement Fund bid to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. Over the last ten years, The Education Alliance has an excellent record of gaining funding. The condition of the building stock at Driffield School has been an issue preceding the involvement of The Education Alliance and Special Measures does not result in any direct additional funding for the school. However, the Local Authority did commission some extra support following the judgement for leadership and Teaching and Learning.

Since February 2017, the Education Alliance has commissioned the re-configuration of the West dining facilities and the refurbishment of North toilets will take place in the summer holidays.

As said, The Education Alliance is submitting a Condition Improvement Fund bid to the Education Funding Agency to refurbish windows and roofs. This refurbishment will be dependent on a successful bid.

We are mindful of recent issues that have arisen in schools and we wish to reassure you that the trust has a lockdown and evacuation procedure for each school and staff are aware of the actions they should take in such circumstances.

We are aware that, particularly in hot weather, hydration is an important issue. Students are encouraged to fill up water bottles before school, at break and lunchtime. Students can take water in bottles to lessons and there is ample time in the school day, outside lesson time, to replenish water bottles.

We recognise your concerns regarding the heating system. The heating system and the poor state of the buildings were both inherited by the trust in February 2017. Before this, the Local Authority was responsible for the condition of the site and buildings and Health and Safety. The fact that the boiler is old, unfortunately, means that the hot water and heating systems cannot be totally isolated. This means that, particularly in East building, there is some heat creep back into the pipes from the hot water system.

Community

It is important to us that we have strong community, staff and student voice at Driffield School. The Local Governing Body has parental voice formally built into its governance structure with the appointment of governors who are parents. Staff voice is also built in and the Local Governing Body has two employees of the school on its board. The Local Governing Body is meeting to work on issues facing Driffield School

including results over a number of years, financial instability and poor building stock. Governor information is available on the website.

The school will be supporting the Driffield show and parents and students are being asked to make a return this week. The Tour De Yorkshire live feed for students unfortunately didn't work because of the TV coverage interruption as it passed through Driffield. This was, indeed, very disappointing. However, all Year 7 attended the event and created a human bike on the show ground.

Spiers Bank has been used by A level students for science fieldwork and also for PE. Spiers Bank is run by a charitable trust. Donations or involvement by the community would be welcomed by the trust. Contact can be made via the Spiers Trust treasurer Mr Steve Gibson.

Blanket work experience for Year 10/11 students is no longer the norm in most high schools. East Riding Council no longer has the personnel or funds to subsidise the Health and Safety and Disclosure and Barring Service checks necessary to undertake the placements.

Students go out on work experience when it is specific to a programme of study or when they arrange it outside school time. The Education Alliance offers the Industry Mentoring Programme to interested sixth form students, which gives them a bespoke experience with a mentor from industry. This has been a very successful programme and Sarah Barley, Head of Extended Studies, has spent 1 day a week in Driffield School since conversion, working on this programme with sixth form students.

Ofsted noted last year, that half of the 301 parents who responded to the questionnaire stated they would not recommend the school to other parents. This year we have received 241 responses to the parent questionnaire and 77% of parents now say they would recommend the school. This is 6% below the national average for secondary school parents but an improvement since the Ofsted visit.

Rewards

One of the main priorities for next year in the School Development Plan, is a review of celebration and rewards system. Tom Fisher, Assistant Headteacher, has been appointed and he will lead on these developments from September, 2017.

Communication

Driffield School wishes to encourage parents to work with the senior leadership team on individual and school issues. The Head of School and senior team have held Head's Surgeries, which are open to all parents to discuss individual concerns and trust surgeries are scheduled in at the end of each academic year. A new Office Manager has also been appointed to support better communication with parents.

Faye Warren has been appointed, since Easter, as SENCO to work with parents with children with Special Educational Needs.

Funding

Special Measures does not result in any additional funding. When the school went into Special Measures the Local Authority commissioned some support to begin the programme of improvement in Teaching and Learning.

The cost of supply teaching continues to be high. This has been the case for the last three years, despite the overstaffing, due to high levels of absence. National terms and conditions clearly state that contractually, teachers cannot be asked to cover for absent colleagues on a regular basis, which can then result in cover costs, however, the trust is working with the Senior Leadership Team and trade unions to ensure we focus on improving staff health and wellbeing through support and intervention and clear policies and procedures.

This half term sickness absences of teaching staff has gone down to 2.99%. This is the lowest it has been for a year when it has been 6.1%. The reduction in the number of staff on long term sick has followed the work carried out by the school and the trust HR teams.

Culture

The Education Alliance meets regularly with unions and have been advised that neither East Riding of Yorkshire Council nor Driffield School have undertaken a staff survey at the school. It has been agreed with our trade unions that we will conduct a staff survey in October 2017 across the trust and this will be undertaken on an annual basis. Results will be anonymous and we will analyse the information and agree appropriate actions with the Local Governing Body of Driffield School and our trade unions. The school also

wishes to strengthen the student voice and a new system of student voice has been established and a new student leadership structure created.

Students have worked with trust staff and relationships between these staff and students have been very good. Students have taken part in the trust video and have watched it in assembly, along with the other students in the trust. The message of the video and the assemblies was that we are all on the same team and everyone in each school is of equal value.

Thank you once again for getting in touch and sharing your concerns. We are committed to engaging with parents, staff and students through our forums, surveys, student voice, student leadership, surgeries and other processes as we seek to rebuild Driffield School into a school of which staff, parents, students, Governors and the community are really proud.

Driffield School went into Special Measures in March last year because it was inadequate in all areas of provision: leadership and management; quality of teaching, learning and assessment; personal development, behaviour and welfare. Since February, there have been some promising indicators; a full staff complement of well qualified staff appointed for September; a recent reduction in supply; the resolution of long term sickness cases and a reduction in the number of exclusions. However, there is still a lot of work to be done.

Your child's education is important to us and we would welcome your contact regarding any individual concerns you have about your child's education or comments on how we can improve their school experience. Please contact Francesca Roper, Executive Assistant.

We have also noted the helpful recommendations about a website and the school will discuss arrangements for sporting fixtures with the PE department.

Richard Swain

Karen Dow

Chair of The Education Alliance

Chair of Driffield School and Sixth Form Governing Body