

## Southampton School Improvement Officer annual visit report 2020-21

<b>School</b>	St George Catholic VA College	
<b>Headteacher</b>	James Habberley, head of school head@stgcc.co.uk Lyn Bourne, executive headteacher lbourne@stgcc.co.uk	
<b>Chair of Governors</b>	Charles Marchetti / charlesamarchetti@gmail.com	
<b>School Improvement Officer</b>	Alan Taylor-Bennett	<b>Date of visit:</b> w/c 21 Sept 2020
<b>Other attendees</b>	nil	
<b>Last Ofsted inspection grade / date</b>	Judged as 'continues to be good' at a short inspection in April 2016	
<b>2019/20 SMG category</b>	Category A / autumn 2019	
<b>Information about the school</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10.5% of pupils have SEND in school of which <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ 1.4% have an EHCP</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 40.2% of pupils have EAL</li> <li>• 17.0% are eligible for PP</li> <li>• 11.5% take FSM</li> <li>• -0.2% change in FSM since academic year 2019/20 as an overall % of NoR</li> <li>• 95.7% attendance 2019/20</li> <li>• 97.1% attendance since Sep 20</li> <li>• 25% of those offered on-site F2F teaching during closure in 2019/20 actually attended</li> <li>• 9.6% persistent absence 2019/20</li> <li>• 1.3% pupils had 1 or more exclusion(s) in 2019/20</li> <li>• 1.8% pupils were in-year leavers EHE/left school 2019/20</li> <li>• 2 pupils had reduced timetables in 2019/20</li> </ul>	

**Second visit recommended for Autumn 2 / Spring 1?**      No

Area to develop	Timescale and intended <b>impact</b>
Continue to develop the plans to respond to any resumption of a national/local partial or full lockdown with some form of blended learning.	Immediate. Draw on significant experience gained over last few months in delivering remote learning and having systems to ensure safeguarding for students at risk.
Consider how students' views and ideas about provision over the summer term and currently can be formally captured.	Reflect on this over the next month or two. Strong feedback channels could further strengthen students' confidence and also generate some useful insights into areas of strength and opportunities for developing provision.
LA to resolve the current problems about necessary safeguarding information between the police and the school (PPN1 notices)	Urgent. Necessary information will start to flow between all relevant parties once more.

## How evidence was obtained

Meetings were held on Teams with:

- the headteacher in a 'setting the scene' call and in a feedback call
- members of the senior leadership team - pastoral focus
- members of the senior leadership team – curriculum/T&L focus
- four curriculum leads (maths, English, D&T and BusSt)
- students in years 8, 9 and 10
- senior staff, link governor and SCR officer re s/g
- representative of the governing body
- a group of class teachers.

Documentation reviewed:

- SEF
- development plan
- attendance data
- CDP target sheet 2020-21
- FGB minutes from July 2020 meeting
- Covid-19 risk assessment and related documentation via the website
- results 2020 analysis.

## Summary of key findings

(school's strengths and aspects requiring attention)

- Very good and clear general and child-specific communication with parents and with staff has been maintained during the pandemic. This was repeatedly cited by students and staff as a major factor in the very successful start to the autumn term.
- There was good provision to ensure continuity of learning over the summer term. This ensured that many students began the autumn term much more confidently and happily than they may have otherwise.
- The Covid-19 risk assessment is thorough, but the senior team appreciate the need to develop plans to respond to the need to undertake a partial closure and move to some degree of blended learning for at least a section of the community. We discussed the advantages of contacting heads of other schools who have been through this decision-making process.
- The existing high levels of care and support for students and staff have been successfully adapted to meet new and changing needs over the last 6 months. Senior staff know about staff's individual circumstances and they are caring in their responses to any request for special consideration.
- The current curriculum emphasis is quite rightly on ensuring that important key knowledge and skills in each subject in each year group are secure, there is reliably (adapted) high quality teaching, and that medium- and long-term planning is amended in the light of students' current learning needs. There is no 'racing to catch up' and no sense of panic about current standards.
- The senior team have worked very successfully to cope with the challenges of Covid-19 and have also continued their broader school improvement work. The capacity of the development plan to drive improvement securely and reliably has been further improved and the quality of the self-evaluation that underpins it is now excellent.

## The quality of education

- From Easter teachers continued to operate the usual timetable slots in a combination of delivered lessons and being available to support. It was found that some students were selective about which subjects they took part in. Those whose attendance was unreliable in any week were contacted by their teachers on the Friday of that week. Staff feel that around 4 in every 5 students showed the expected level of active and reliable involvement and added that the majority of the others responded well to the 'reminders' and chasing.
- The adoption of Teams (from scratch) around Easter meant that students' learning needs could be responded to efficiently when they came back into school in September. Staff reflected that had the potential benefits to T&L of this technology been appreciated beforehand, and systems been up and running to some extent already, that the move to depending on it would have been easier. But now that online platforms are part of their work, staff are keen to carry on making use of it.
- Students spoken with felt very well supported by the school in their learning during the summer term. Several said that this meant that returning to school in September was a lot easier than it may well have otherwise been. Some Year 9 students spoke about variations between subjects in the amount of taught time, but they said that those subjects that did the least still definitely did enough. MFL was identified as a particularly strong on-line provider. A few students felt that there was quite a lot of Teams input occasionally and that they needed a little more time for independent learning.
- Coursework catchup provision for KS4 students was in place early on in the summer term.
- Engagement in F2F learning for the children of key workers and for vulnerable students (the 'emergency school') grew from 12 students initially to 80 by the end of the summer term.
- Existing strengths were utilised – the SEF rates the curriculum as strong, emphasising as it does the development of knowledge and skills for future learning and employment and the resilience of the curriculum mapping in departments.
- The net effect has been that staff sense much less of a 'step change' in the quality of learning, and far fewer gaps in learning, than may well have been the case. The accent is entirely appropriately on high quality teaching, adapting curriculum plans and providing CPD for staff to utilise their skills as effectively as possible in a classroom following the risk assessment requirements.
- The learning of key groups is being supported very well. Laptops were provided for any students who didn't have access to one during lockdown. Mentors were assigned to all DP students via the school. Selected students identified by class teachers were given one-to-one tuition during lockdown for key subjects. The school will be using the national tutor programme. Individuals giving concerns are supported through a variety of additional measures.
- SEN support is being maintained at the usual high levels through the Trinity team. Communications with home have been stepped up and assistance for individual students with specific additional needs is even more rapid and personalised in response to the need to allay anxieties.
- Practical subjects have been hit hardest, with D&T understandably needing to make significant adaptations to the teaching schedule. The digital platform has been particularly useful in maintaining as much continuity as possible over the last few months. They look to resume full time practical work in January when the new block is open.
- Outcomes for Year 11 in 2020 were impressive, with 87% achieving Basics at G4+ and 64% at G5+ and an overall A8 of 57.9. The modelled P8 figure was a best ever +0.64. Senior staff were pleased with the level of debate and the rigour of the internal moderation procedures undertaken.

## Behaviour and attitudes

- Staff feel that students have started term with positive and willing attitudes. Staff attribute this to the long-standing positive ethos developed in the school, and the very good levels of communication maintained with all families (and some in particular) throughout the period March to August. There has been a generally very high level of compliance with safety guidelines. Students said that the various measures in place (sanitisers, masks etc) made them feel more secure and safe. Attendance on the first day back for all was 98% despite it being a Friday. Senior staff described it as a 'very smooth start'.
- Maintaining students' positive attitudes to learning and sustaining resilience have been major emphases throughout. At least one member of the senior staff is currently moving around the school each lesson, visiting classrooms, speaking to students and giving chances to hear and address concerns and worries.
- Previously secure levels of attendance for key groups (SEN and disadvantaged students both around 94%) give a very good foundation on which to respond to the challenges of reinduction in September. Attendance since the start of term has been very good, except by some disadvantaged students in Year 10 (an ongoing issue with this group): 16 have attendance below 90% and 21 below 95%.
- The behaviour policy has been amended in the light of the need for specific responses to Covid-19. This has been explained carefully to students and their families and the changes have been well received. Levels of compliance are high.
- Very low levels of FTE in 2019/20 point also to very good systems being in place to manage behaviour and attitudes, and high expectations, that were capitalised on in the new circumstances from March 2020.
- Students felt positively and supportively held to account for their learning in the summer term. They liked that fact that teachers required their reliable attendance at online lessons, and for work to be submitted for marking.

## Personal development

- Tutors phoned parents every 2 weeks over the period March-July, maintaining good communications and enabling successes to be celebrated and concerns to be aired. Students spoken with really appreciated this and conveyed the impression of knowing that there was a strong safety net in place for their learning and their welfare.
- The school's Catholic ethos is the backbone of its provision for social, moral, social and cultural development. This has continued since March, with a variety of adaptations. There is a wealth of related provision in all year groups. Assemblies have been adapted to be Teams broadcast events into tutor bases to maintain the sense of community and shared experiences. The large-scale Masses organised in the sports hall have been turned into tutor-group based Masses over the term.
- Year 11 were well supported from March. They were sent work and contacted regularly. Very good links with colleges were established and students were able to access work, often in the form of transition packs, and receive guidance from staff there. The Southampton Kickstart Campaign worked well for these students. By July only two students out of 158 had no plans for September, and one of them is involved in a family relocation some considerable distance away.
- Pastoral systems continue to be the combination of strong systems reliably operated, and rapid individualised/personalised responses. The latter have broadened in scope and quantity in response to the changing needs of students and their families. A senior pastoral leader reflected that she had always fully understood the significance of listening carefully and trying hard to understand individual circumstances, but this approach had proven invaluable over the last six months. Governor affirmed that senior staff worked hard to understand individual family circumstances to provide the best support possible.

- The students spoken with appreciate the school's work to maintain their learning and their welfare. They understand that staggered starts and ends mean that there are necessary limitations on breaks and lunchtimes and miss the 'down time' that such opportunities offer.
- The prefect system is being adapted in the light of the current situation. Despite bubbling limiting opportunities for inter-year cooperation, prefects will coordinate teams each week to produce a short video illustrating an aspire value, matched to the assembly theme of that week.
- Food parcels were organised for some families before the voucher system began and during the time when it worked unreliably. Disadvantaged students in Year 11 in summer were kept on roll to ensure that they had access to the voucher scheme.

## Leadership and management

- A full risk assessment was in place to steer plans for the September reopening. Risks are coded against likelihood and impact and RAGed accordingly. Systems of controls detail prevention and response measures and key staff are associated with specific hazards. The document is written clearly and accessibly. Plans for a response to the need to undertake blended learning in the event of a new partial or total lockdown are not yet fully developed but are in hand.
- Transport has been a particular challenge for school leaders since September. Around 40% of students are bussed in. While the detailed guidance on transport issued by the government is re-interpreted for school buses there have been understandable parental concerns to manage. The staggered start times was a complication. Extra transport was required and liaison with the city council was needed to arrange this. In the event, this was managed as well as it could have been.
- The key other challenge that was identified and met was the need to show high levels of care for staff, many of whom had (and some continue to have) concerns due to their personal contexts. Staff feel well supported and appreciate that that senior staff understand their personal circumstances and will respond to their needs as far as possible. Continual adaptations and adjustments made to working practices (eg the recent reorganisation of the meeting schedule) are also appreciated. Staff see 'efficiency' as being an important aspect of decision making – issues are raised and responded to quickly. The quality of working relationships within departments also enables staff to feel supported. Line managers listen and act in the best interests of their team. As a consequence, staff morale is high. Staff attendance is good. There is a 'let's find solutions' attitude prevalent.
- The headteacher has greatly valued the spirit of cooperation and mutual support developed with other Southampton headteachers. Meetings have been very useful and many ideas have been shared.
- The involvement of the seconded HMI was valued. A risk assessment pro-forma was developed, and some useful ideas shared.
- The website is used well to keep parents informed. There are links to key documents published by the government.
- The senior team decided that the focus of the last academic year would be on developing a strong and close focus on the quality of learning, and using this to inform curriculum intent, implementation and impact strategies. The development plan was reorganised to sharpen time and energy on this. This focus was maintained after the advent of Covid-19, albeit with different mechanisms and emphases. Middle leaders have been asked to use their subject and pedagogic expertise to identify crucial aspects of learning in each year and to concentrate on making those secure, rather than attempt to simply catch up on missed content. The necessary shift to 'teaching from the front' has been supported through a variety of means.
- School leaders look forward to broadening students' opportunities in D&T, especially in KS3, when the new block is opened in January 2021.
- The move to bubble year groups by staggering key movement times (including break and lunch times) is successful so far. Minor adaptations to the system (such as extending the lunch break to include a supervised last 10 minutes in students' normal period 4 lesson, and limiting toilet visits as much as possible in periods 2 and 4) have been undertaken.

- The development plan has been adapted since last year and senior staff are now confident that it is a powerful tool to drive school-wide improvement. Self-evaluation is sharp, focused and accurate.
- Staff turnover has been very low from last academic year to this (4 new teaching staff in September 2020). The school tended to appoint more experienced staff when there was a choice.
- The budget continues to be well managed. The apparent healthy reserve is, in reality, funding allocated for provision in the new science and technology block this year, and to offset the impact of the teachers' pay settlement which is not funded until next financial year. There will be an in-year overspend of around £130k this financial year.
- Safeguarding procedures remain secure.
  - There have been no major s/g issues since March over and above the run of normal concerns.
  - Senior staff have ensured that they maintained a wide number of opportunities to capture any concerns and be able to respond to them rapidly. The need to speak up if necessary was continually reinforced with students and staff via email and in face-to-face conversations. There was someone on duty at all times to tackle s/g issues.
  - Special resources were posted on the website for students and parents.
  - From March-August individual cases were RAGed with reds receiving a phone call weekly, ambers 2 weekly and greens 3 weekly. Around 140 calls were being made weekly.
  - The s/g team meet weekly to discuss individual cases. The oversight team meet half terms to exercise strategic oversight of systems and processes.
  - Senior staff are confident that the SCR has been maintained scrupulously. Its scrutiny has not been as frequent as usual – the last full check was undertaken in January 2020 by the link governor and a member of the SLT. This was a strategic decision by senior leaders and governors in the light of more urgent s/g priorities during a period when so few students were in school, there were no visitors and there was no staff turn-over. Leaders are well aware of the need to reinstate a series of frequent checks, including occasional external scrutiny.
  - A mental health nurse has been appointed since the last visit. She works closely with the s/g team.
  - Training has been provided for the 6 new staff (4 teaching and 2 support) and refresher training for others. The training was adapted to meet the different circumstances surrounding the return to school this September. All staff received special online s/g training around Easter in readiness for them to use Teams and other systems to teach and keep in touch online with students and their families. Arrangements for the annual round of governor s/g training are in hand.
  - The s/g policy is up to date and is due for review in December.
  - Having 5 staff trained to DSL standard gives flexibility to the team to enable rapid and effective responses to needs. CPOMs is used well.
  - The building work has been managed well to ensure that there have been no site safety issues.
  - The playing field will be fenced in January, making the whole site secure from that time.
  - Leaders expressed frustration about the lack of police liaison over specific safeguarding concerns – PPN1 notices. These seem to have declined in number across Southampton significantly. The support of the LA has been requested in dealing with this.
  - Staff said that they feel safe in school. Systems and procedures around masks, sanitiser etc are clear and adhered to. This serves to reduce anxiety.
- Governors continue to offer well-informed and rigorous challenge and support to the work of the senior team.
  - All scheduled meetings took place last term, although most were online. There was extra consultation via email on key issues occasionally, as situations demanded, especially around strategic s/g issues. The s/g governor attended the termly steering group meeting early in the summer term.

- Governors saw an early draft of the risk assessment and had ample opportunity to present their views at that stage and at a FGB meeting when it was scrutinised closely. The reopening plan was scrutinised by email communications.
- Governors have also scrutinised the school's plans to adapt teaching and learning practices from September and are satisfied with these. They have ideas around further discussions under four broad heading: contingency plans for a local or national lockdown and the implementation and/or the need to move to some form of blended learning for some or all students; recovery planning for lost learning; the wider curriculum – what does this look like this term and for the foreseeable future; the nature and purpose of student assessment over this academic year.
- The s/g governor and the responsible officer carried out their duties over the summer term.
- Examples were given of specific support and challenge to senior staff around policy and practice over the last 6 months, including assisting with the nature of parental communications and improving links between some parents and mental health support services.
- Governors have used their own informal networks to learn what parents felt about the ways in which the school responded to the issues posed by the pandemic. They are keen to instigate a more formal system to gather these views and opinions and have some ideas how this may be done.
- Governors are pleased with the Year 11 outcomes in 2020. They had chance to involve themselves in aspects of the process that led to the submission of the CAGs.