



## Quality Assurance Consultant Visit

### Spring Term 2017

**School:** Melland High School

**Tel No:** 0161 223 9915

**Principal:** Mrs Sue Warner

**URN:** 138532

**Chair of Governors:** Mr Peter Tite

**QA Consultant:** Judith Jones

**Personnel Involved:** Sue Warner (Principal); Julie Barnett, Jill Cinan (Vice Principals); George Roberts (Science Lead); Nathan Taylor (PMLD teacher); Dean Beddows(Pastoral Mentor); Mike Power (Access Sports); Dan Hughes (Media and Technology Lead Teacher); Jim Muncey (QA Designate); Judith Jones (QA Consultant)

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017

**Copies to:**

The Principal  
The Governing Body

## AGREED FOCUS

1. Setting the scene and updates
2. Assessment and whole school target setting; pupil outcomes (SIP Priority 8)
3. Towards a skill based assessment in science (SIP Priority 5)
4. "To infinity and beyond" for PMLD pupils (SIP Priority 4)
5. Pupil premium update
6. Young Leaders Award (SIP Priority 11)
7. School Improvement update (SIP Priority 1)
8. Learning Walk with Numeracy focus (SIP13)
9. BBC News Report (SIP Priority 11)

## OUTCOMES

### 1. Setting the scene and updates

Dr John Stephens, the recently appointed Bright Futures CEO is a welcomed visible presence around the schools and has acknowledged the expertise Melland can offer to the Trust. Staff appreciate the regular newsletter that he produces in which the achievement of pupils and staff are recognised. Melland's Executive Principal, Mrs Judy O'Kane OBE, has retired fully from her role. As a result Sue Warner, Melland Principal, has applied for the National Leader in Education accreditation, with the aim of the school retaining its Teaching School designation.

### 2. Assessment and whole school target setting; pupil outcomes

- Following the removal of national curriculum levels the school has continued in its quest to develop a system that demonstrates in detail, pupils' progress. Additionally, the retirement of the school's data manager has led to data analysis becoming a more distributive process with teachers further empowered in the analysis of pupils' progress and achievement. The assessment and whole school target setting summary is updated regularly following APPRE and Progress meetings so that it is now a running record of any changes in the process. Through the assessment and moderation process teachers gain a clear understanding of each pupil's knowledge, skills and understanding enabling them to set challenging and aspirational learning targets, identify areas for further development and strengthen learning across the curriculum. The school recognises that the personalisation of targets for individual pupils remains essential, involving a range of considerations.
- The adoption of B Squared has provided a platform for discussion and debate around assessment without levels for all subjects and abilities, although some reservations remain regarding the "Connecting Steps" assessment. The principal used the phrase "disciplined innovation" to describe the schools' way forward in embracing creative solutions for improvements in the whole assessment process, such as is being taken in science and humanities and for pupils experiencing PCLD, whilst ensuring a sound rationale on which the basis of decisions is made.
- Case studies are viewed as being more valuable than ever in capturing pupils' wider achievements; these are now developed within departments enabling a range of staff to contribute.
- Previously, end of key stage outcomes had been analysed and benchmarked nationally using the Durham P Scales Project (now withdrawn) and SIMS assessment manager. Changes to the National Curriculum and transition to the new assessment system, made an accurate and reliable analysis difficult for EKS4 2016. However, during the 2016/2017 academic year, tracking and evaluation of progress in English and maths for the EKS3 cohort (currently Year 8) using exclusively B Squared assessment data will enable a more robust evaluation of progress.
- Unfortunately, B Squared does not provide a benchmark facility and does not transfer easily to CASPA, making comparisons locally and nationally challenging; this is an area senior leaders intend to explore further. The school does work closely with the two other secondary support schools in the city to moderate assessments and accreditations against age related expectations.

- The schools` definition of outstanding/good progress is currently linked to the National Progression Guidance, CASPA data sets, collaboration with other local special schools and its own analysis of longitudinal data. 2016/2017 pupil outcomes will be monitored and evaluated against an updated definition with the following considerations in mind:
  - Changes to national curriculum
  - Introduction of “Assessment without Levels”
  - Introduction of B Squared Connecting Steps and Autism Progression assessments
  - Increase in the delivery of relevant National Accreditation at Key Stage 4
- The school wisely re-visits its definition regularly to reflect the changing profile of cohorts in the school and has already identified that next year an additional band might need to be added between the existing achievement band of P Levels 4 to 8.

*School leaders are determined to continue to develop highly effective systems to assess and evidence pupils` progress. They might wish to consider taking the path that Heatherwood Special School in Doncaster took and actually visit other schools in the country with recognised good practice in this regard.*

### **3. Towards a skill based assessment in science**

- The science lead and other science teacher were concerned that the revised science curriculum contains too much scientific knowledge and insufficient skills content for the pupils at Melland. They have embarked on a project, working with the vice principal of a primary school in the Trust (who is on her NPQH placement at Melland) to develop a system that will monitor pupils` skills over the five years they are in school, that works within the curriculum. They are aiming to develop a system that will demonstrate the small steps that pupils make, and to provide a curriculum that stimulates students` curiosity of the world around them.
- The skills can be differentiated and will be divided into each area of science and a set for investigation ie biology, chemistry, physics and scientific thinking. Some skills will be generic whilst others will be specific to a scientific area.
- Under present consideration is that each skill will have 4 steps:
  - Engaging
  - Involving
  - Gaining Understanding
  - Mastered

It is intended to agree definitions for each of the four areas and to produce guidelines as to how to use the system.

- The science lead and the science teacher have undertaken SIMS training to enable them to create assessment spreadsheets. The primary school vice principal is working on identifying skills below national curriculum levels.
- Current questions for consideration include: does every area of science have to have the same number of skills? Also, will the primary science curriculum be appropriate at Key Stage 3 and what might be an appropriate curriculum at Key Stage 4?
- The aim is to create a system that will enable teachers to set short, medium and long term targets and a unique learning profile for each pupil.

*The science coordinator is an excellent example of the way in which subject and key stage leads drive forward their areas of responsibility with passion and enthusiasm. They benefit greatly from undertaking research and external advice to bring in new ideas.*

### **4. “To infinity and beyond” for pupils experiencing PMLD pupils**

- Over the spring term, the school has been researching the most effective and meaningful assessment and curriculum to meet the needs of learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). In doing so, they have drawn upon the work of highly respected professionals in this field such as Professors Jean Ware, Penny Lacey and Barry Carpenter, additionally researching the practice of outstanding special schools nationally such as the Dales (North Yorkshire), Fountaindale (Mansfield) and Castle Wood (Coventry). The pre-formal curriculum at Melland aims to be a holistic, process based, sensory curriculum focussing on developing students` communication and engagement through a range of rich experiences rather than being driven by traditional subjects, which facilitates a highly-personalised approach to learning in the most meaningful way. At Key Stages 3 and 4 this will be delivered through a themed approach

following a three-year rolling programme whilst in the sixth form a project based curriculum will focus on leisure and adulthood that prepare students for their adult life. The four main curriculum areas are:

- Communication
  - Thinking skills
  - Personal care and independence
  - Physical development
- The school was fortunate to appoint a teacher (NT) on a supply basis at the beginning of the spring term who is well experienced in working with PMLD pupils, whose philosophy and approach is in tune with senior leaders` current thinking. The principal reports that he has brought direction and confidence to the team, involving them closely in decision making. He baselined all students using the Quest overview (the Northern Ireland version of Routes for Learning) followed by a more in-depth assessment using the Dales School (North Yorkshire) continuum of skill development scale: ie **prompting, fluency, maintenance and generalisation**. The outcomes of assessment informed the learning intentions for each pupil that are detailed on a personal learning intervention map under four areas:
    - Engagement
    - Communication
    - Access Technology
    - Social and Emotional
  - At the end of each session evidence of learning is agreed through discussion with the staff team and recorded on post-it notes against the Barry Carpenter Engagement Profile. An observational summary has been recorded for each student that clearly details the activity focus and potential learning outcomes in a step by step approach.
  - As part of the ongoing development of the PMLD curriculum, one of the assistant vice-principals has coordinated a number of productive multi-agency meetings including the PMLD teachers, the speech and language therapist, the educational psychologist and the principal. Their recommendations will form part of the developments.

*The school is to be applauded for the carefully considered collaborative approach it is taking to this area of development, informed by the most recent and relevant research and pedagogy. However, as leaders are drawing upon such a wide range of evidence using differing terminologies this needs to be brought together to give a greater clarity, particularly for any external audiences such as Ofsted, Challenge Partners and the QA consultant. The school should be able to articulate a clear rationale for the basis of this development and ensure that the schemes of work and curriculum offer provide pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum with equality of opportunity for all; assessment measures should demonstrate precisely pupils` progress and achievements over time.*

## 5. Young Leaders Award

- Discussions with three students (two from the sixth form and one year 11) powerfully evidenced the breadth of experiences they had undertaken to achieve their Youth Leaders Award. They had been hugely fortunate to undertake voluntary work at national sporting events such as the National Squash Championships.
- They gained a great sense of achievement from working with thirty Year 4 pupils from a local primary school in the Trust when they worked as a team to plan and deliver a PE lesson. They were taught how to plan a lesson and to include important elements such as the rules of the game. Students spoke with pride about this experience; one young lady said "It felt really good and I realised that I liked working with children". They spoke positively about their improved relationship with each other and of their increased confidence, recognising each others achievements.

*By participating in the Youth Leaders Award programme, students are given a superb opportunity to widen their horizons and gain worthwhile experiences and valuable life and social skills preparing them extremely well for the next stage in their education.*

## 6. School Improvement update and interim evaluation

- One of the vice principals (JB) provided an overview for the QA consultant designate of the schools` unique approach to school improvement planning showing how each priority area is monitored and evaluated by named governors and the IMPACT group. School improvement priorities are appropriately informed by the self-evaluation summary (SES).The role and responsibilities of middle leaders has been strengthened as

they are too a vital component of the school improvement cycle by each having responsibility for a specific priority. Progress towards the achievement of each objective is reviewed and recorded regularly both in a brief narrative and by RAG rating. Improvement priorities are inextricably linked to appraisal at every level.

*Review and evaluation of the SIP and SEF are clearly focussed on **impact**. The format of the SEF is highly accessible to an external audience. The school ensures that its clear vision of how it will develop, improve, and raise achievement is developed with, and shared with governors, staff and other stakeholders; as a result they have ownership of it and are fully on board.*

## **7. Learning Walk with Numeracy focus**

- The learning walk confirmed again, how leaders and staff have created a calm, purposeful and highly inclusive learning environment.
- New technologies including multi-media are used exceptionally well and creatively to enhance learning and pupils' independence, for example, the immersive learning environment in science to bring a tropical rainforest to life.
- Inspiring, colourful and thoughtfully resourced learning environments and displays motivate pupils to achieve extremely well. Classrooms are clean and tidy and well organised so that pupils can move around and easily access resources.
- The cross curriculum focus on numeracy was strongly evident in all areas of the school highlighting the ingenuity of staff to integrate mathematics in their own curriculum area. For example, in English "How many witches did Macbeth meet?" In art pupils made 3D flags of South America and in geography pupils were tasked with calculating the distance from China to Brazil. In a maths lesson, pupils used augmented reality to make resources for their peers, acting as educators they made up the content and context for a learning activity, which other pupils found highly engaging.
- In classrooms and corridors, pupils own work was displayed and clearly labelled to draw attention to the specific mathematical skill or concept. Displays included questions and information to extend pupils' learning.

*The school improvement priority to raise standards in mathematics through a cross-curricular termly focus was strongly evidence in all curriculum areas. Teachers' high expectations capture pupils' interests and enthusiasm; their excellent relationship with pupils creates trust and confidence.*

## 8. BBC News Report

- Discussion with two Year 7 pupils illustrated forcibly how through their participation in the BBC News report they had been enabled to fulfil their aspirations. They clearly embraced the opportunity with great enjoyment and enthusiasm saying they would love to do it again.
- Further observations of other students who had contributed to BBC news reports pinpointed the achievements of other students. For example, conducting an interview they developed skills in engaging with the public whilst providing a huge confidence boost with its own intrinsic reward.

*The BBC News Report initiative illustrates another feature of the schools` determination to provide the most exciting and engaging learning experiences they can. It typifies the tremendous drive and energy of staff to "make things happen" using state of the art technology as a highly effective supportive tool.*

### SUMMARY

- The principal, senior leaders and governors set high expectations and have ensured that an extremely warm, positive and uplifting learning environment has been established. This encourages pupils to do as well as they can and to enjoy the rich and varied school life they are offered.
- Leaders at all levels pursue excellence and innovation with rigour and embed securely into their practice. The school never rests on its laurels, always eager to find the next challenge in order to improve further.
- A striking feature of the school is the ease with which pupils talk to an outsider, confidently explaining the benefits of an initiative they have been involved in.

*Unfortunately, due to lack of time it was not possible to cover all items on the planned agenda or to adequately discuss and evaluate practice and systems observed. The consultant is confident that this will be taken into consideration in planning the summer term QA visit.*