

Governor Visit – General Learning Walk

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8th December 2023

I was accompanied around school during Registration and Period 1 by Carole Bailey Deputy Head teacher with the intention of seeing the school in action. The focus was to look at teaching and learning as well as the Hive Switch in action.

This week was Oracy Week and we saw evidence of excellent engagement in all Registration groups we visited. Topics ranged from extending vocabulary, speech writing and speech delivery. In one instance the classroom teacher was leading a discussion on the use and importance of body language when addressing an audience. It was impressive to see there was a lot of emphasis on speaking and listening from teachers of many subject areas who all tackled oracy confidently. It was apparent there were excellent relationships with Registration groups and their tutors. The atmosphere was studious and calm which was great as students felt happy to contribute. One MFL teacher was especially impressive in his command of the classroom and content.

We were on the corridor during lesson changeover, and it was orderly and calm despite the amount of students moving from room to room. Staff were visible and were moving with the students. I heard only positive conversations between staff and students during this time which was particularly notable.

Geography lessons were very good with pupils engaged quickly and calmly in the two classrooms we visited. One had a cover teacher who was obviously au fait with the school and pupils responded positively to him.

In Maths there were excellent examples of engagement and teaching. The use of interactive whiteboards stood out here as a way to engage learning. The use of this technology was also interspersed with more traditional methods as the students got to grips with rotation and plotting. On the whole there were excellent examples of teaching and learning, however a couple of lessons stood out as the pupils weren't quite as engaged. The Deputy Headteacher was concerned and assured me she would follow up with discussions with staff.

In English, we saw a Year 8 scholar's lesson. On looking at their books it was apparent that they were working at a very high level for their age with the use of challenging texts and an expectation of deep analysis. The students were highly engaged and when I asked them, they all spoke of how they enjoyed being challenged. Very impressive.

In other English lessons pupils continued to be engaged even though the topic was paragraph structure. The curriculum was developed to use particular extracts to analyse that they found interesting which obviously helped. Again, I saw excellent relationships between staff and students and behaviour was exceptional in this subject. In particular, the students were completely engaged in their learning and completely unfazed by our visit!

In History all Year 9 lessons were following the curriculum as they tackled questions around the rise of the Third Reich in Germany. We witnessed excellent Q and A aspects of lessons which encouraged students to think of how they would have reacted in that situation. It was also linked to some elements of current affairs which was edifying.

I was struck by the calm and purposeful atmosphere of the school. As we walked the corridors we saw a couple of pupils but they were all challenged about where they were going and why they were out of lessons. The day coincided with a train strike and many pupils were delayed because of this.

All in all a wonderful visit which reinforced much of what we discuss in Governors meetings. A strong work ethic from both staff and students, a calm purposeful atmosphere with clear evidence of the Hive Switch both in and out of classrooms and challenge in students' learning even in registration time. A pleasure to visit!