Dartmoor
TEACHING SCHOOL ALLIANCE

Primary School Improvement
Programme 2018 to 2019

DRAFT

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School Effectiveness Programme

Aims

Aims of the programme:

- Strengthen schools' self-evaluation and improvement planning procedures.
- Build school leaders' capacity to drive improvement.
- Equip school leaders with an up-to-date, in-depth understanding of inspection today.
- Provide an independent, external and objective evaluation on the school's work in three key areas.

The School Effectiveness Review process

- The review is led by our Senior Associate for Inspection, supported by up to four trained senior leaders from participating schools.
- The review process takes 1 ½ days.
- The Effectiveness Review will focus on three areas set by the school:
- a strength
- an area that is improving
- an area of weakness.
- The key findings from the review are followed up in a detailed report that will provide a robust, grade-free evaluation with clear recommendations.

Day 1 of the review

Initial meeting with school leaders

- During the initial meeting with school leaders, the lead reviewer will seek to explore and discuss the following areas:
- school context
- leaders' views on strengths / areas for improvement
- school improvement plan
- school evaluation form
- historic published data, including the Inspection Data Summary report
- current school assessment information
- the three key areas for the review
- a timetable of actions for the second day, including key staff who might be involved.
- A timetable will be completed with school leaders to ensure the expectations for day 2 are clear

Day 2 of the review

Programme of events

- The review team will arrive on site at 8:30am. The day will begin with a brief team meeting held with school leaders to check that all agreed actions are going ahead.
- Review activities will take place between 9am and 3pm. These are likely to include:
- lesson observations
- learning walks
- book scrutiny
- data analysis
- discussions with school staff
- discussions with pupils
- School leaders are strongly encouraged to accompany the review team throughout the day's events. Effective ongoing professional dialogue should ensure that school leaders are not presented with any surprises.
- During all activities, members of the review team are required to record their findings on 'Evidence Collection Forms'. These will form the evidence base for the review.
- Between 3pm and 4:30pm the review team will meet with school leaders to discuss and summarise findings. This meeting is recorded on the 'Final Evaluation Form'.
- The review team conclude the day on site by meeting with governors to summarise and feedback their key findings and suggested targets for improvement.

School effectiveness review training events:

Schools that subscribe to the School Improvement Programme will be provided with the opportunity to attend bespoke training events that are held at different points throughout the academic year. These are aimed at senior and middle leaders with a view of providing leaders with the skills and expertise required to undertake a school effectiveness review. Attendance at these events is mandatory for leaders who wish to team on effectiveness review events.

Key aims of the training

The training will enable leaders to:

- understand the principles and methodology for effective school reviews
- understand how to prepare for and contribute to the school effectiveness review process
- learn how to apply professional judgement in the context of a school review and reach judgements based on a range of evidence

- understand how to gather and evaluate evidence, make secure judgements and deliver clear feedback to the school about the review findings

The training will focus on securing good practice in key areas such as:

- the effective analysis of school performance data, including the Inspection Data Summary Report
- school website compliance
- lesson observations and learning walks
- work scrutiny
- interviewing school staff
- pupil voice
- gathering evidence to support judgements on personal development, well-being and behaviour
- reviewing early years provision
- reviewing provision for SEND
- triangulating evidence to confirm findings

Reporting the outcomes of a School Effectiveness Review

Leaders will receive a detailed and comprehensive report outlining the key findings of the review process. These will be focused on the key areas identified by the school. In addition, the report will also contain evidence of the school's effectiveness in key areas including leadership and management; quality of teaching, learning and assessment; outcomes for pupils; and personal development, behaviour and well-being. The report will also provide leaders with precise areas for improvement that will be rooted in the review findings. An extract is given below as an example.

Highly effective area (example):

Pupils' achievement in reading across the school

- Leaders set a culture of high expectations in reading, supported by pupils' voice in the allocation of books. Consequently, pupils select reading material that is of most interest to them. They demonstrate a love of reading.
- Teachers ensure that pupils have the appropriate skills, including a secure knowledge of phonics, to support them when working out unfamiliar words. As a result, pupils are resilient and persevere when confronted with a more challenging text.

- During whole class reading sessions teachers are highly effective in developing pupils' abilities to interrogate a text. Pupils are encouraged to make links with other books that they have read and think more deeply about an author's use of language.
- Pupils read with a high degree of fluency and accuracy in relation to their different starting points. This supports their strong progress and aids their skills in comprehension.
- Pupils have a good range of age-appropriate skills to support them when retrieving key information from a text. As a result, they confidently answer a range of questions about what they have read.
- Pupils in the early years and key stage 1 read regularly at home. This supports their good progress in reading over time.
- Pupils effectively express their views on events, characters and author's choice of language. This further enhances their understanding and enjoyment of the books they have read.
- The most able pupils confidently recount the stories they have read in-depth and make informed predictions as to what might happen next. They demonstrate an extensive knowledge of the meanings of words and use this successfully to support inference and deduction.
- Pupils with low starting points, including those with special needs, use their phonic knowledge successfully when working out less familiar words. This develops their confidence as readers.
- In the early years, children make clear links between their phonics learning and their independent reading. This furthers their persistence when tackling unfamiliar words.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to apply their reading skills across the wider curriculum. However, leaders are alert to the need to ensure that pupils, particularly boys, continue to select an appropriate mix of fiction and nonfiction reading material.

Improving area (example):

The development of pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics.

- Teachers and teaching assistants are adept at skilfully questioning pupils in mathematics to probe their understanding, check for misconceptions and provide further challenge. This supports pupils' strong progress in lessons.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have a strong grasp of age related expectations in mathematics for the pupils they teach. As a result, explanations are precise, enabling pupils to securely acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills and apply these with high degrees of success in their learning.
- Pupils are routinely provided with opportunities to articulate and record their mathematical reasoning. Consequently, they demonstrate a strong grasp of technical language and are

provided with opportunities that further extend their thinking. Discussions with pupils reveal their confidence and enjoyment in this aspect of mathematics.

- Teachers are skilled in meeting the challenges of teaching mixed age classes. They ensure that differentiated learning activities are meeting the needs of pupils in different ability groups and cohorts. Consequently, pupils are securely acquiring the appropriate skills in mathematics associated with their different stages of development.

- Pupils are given sufficient time in lessons to think about their work and answer mathematical questions. They are encouraged to explore their ideas with their peers, through purposeful and informative peer learning conversations.

- Feedback from teachers encourages pupils to think and reason more deeply about their work in mathematics.

- Teachers and teaching assistants use apparatus and visual images effectively to embed new learning concepts. However, pupils do not routinely access these resources and apparatus to support their independent learning.

- Pupils confidently apply their knowledge, understanding and skills in problem solving tasks. They are skilled in choosing the most efficient approaches to solving calculations.

- Evidence in pupils' books demonstrates that most are acquiring a broad range of age associated skills, enabling them to make strong progress from their individual starting points, particularly in the development of reasoning skills.

- Pupils have regular opportunities to consolidate their learning, furthering their conceptual fluency and accuracy in mathematics.

- Teachers and teaching assistants develop pupils' reasoning skills effectively through the use of images, jottings, symbols, words and different contexts. These different approaches serve to embed their understanding well.

- An appropriate level of subject coverage is ensuring that pupils are successfully acquiring a broad range of age associated skills in mathematics.

- There is evidence of pupils deepening their understanding and being challenged through reasoning and the application of their skills.

Area of weakness (example):

Progress and attainment of the most able pupils

- Leaders have implemented a range of strategies to further raise the achievement of the most able pupils. For example, planning in mathematics now incorporates tasks that are designed to deepen pupils' understanding and develop their higher order thinking.

- In mathematics, the most able pupils are skilled in selecting the most efficient method when solving calculations. They demonstrate a high degree of conceptual fluency and accuracy in their work which is a key contributor to their improving progress over time. The most able pupils are developing higher level skills in mathematical reasoning, demonstrating their

mastery of a wide range of technical language. For example, in one lesson visited, pupils were required to write their own problems to accompany a given calculation. Evidence in pupils' work over time shows that they are routinely required to grapple with new content and do not always get things right first-time in mathematics. However, opportunities for the most able mathematicians to routinely apply their skills in solving rich and sophisticated problems are inconsistent across most classes / year groups.

- The most able pupils are having opportunities to demonstrate their achievements at the higher standard across the wider curriculum. For example, in science, the most able pupils use first-hand exploration, conjecture and reasoning effectively to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. As a result, they can undertake scientific investigations of increasing complexity. However, the over use of work sheets in some of the foundation subjects can put a ceiling on pupils' potential achievements in some classes.

- In classes where the most able pupils make the strongest progress, teachers ensure that learning tasks are either differentiated or an additional challenge is available to stretch them. Furthermore, ability groupings are flexible to best meet the needs of individual pupils. For example, in English the most able pupils must consider the impact that different writing techniques can have on the reader. However, leaders recognise that inconsistency in the effective use of differentiation can slow down learning for the most able. Leaders also recognise the need to ensure that teachers routinely provide opportunities to challenge the most able during lesson introductions.

- In English, the most able pupils demonstrate increasing competence in their use of a range of age related expectations, particularly in their use of content. However, the accuracy of pupils' skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar can falter and hold their achievement back. It is essential that challenge for the most able writers is more explicit, enabling them to regularly demonstrate their mastery of writing devices and techniques at the higher standard.

- Teachers use marking to challenge the most able and move their thinking forward in mathematics effectively. For example, challenge questions such as 'Can your answers be simplified?' and 'How do you know?', encourage pupils to reflect more deeply on their work.

Agreed areas for development (example)

- Leaders need to further develop their approaches to monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning by:
- ensuring that a clear focus is maintained on the impact that teaching has on outcomes for pupils in different groups, including the most able.
- further upskilling middle leaders, particularly in areas such as lesson observations; learning walks; and interpreting published assessment information.

- Leaders need to further develop the quality of teaching and learning by:
- ensuring that teachers timely intervention in lessons swiftly addresses misconceptions and misunderstandings so that pupils make strong progress with their learning
- ensuring that effective practices in marking are consistent across the wider-curriculum and are in line with school policy.
- Governors hold leaders to account for the school's performance by:
  - routinely asking challenging questions to explore the impact of leaders' actions around key areas such as performance data, additional funding, quality of teaching over time and safeguarding.
- Teachers raise achievement for the most able pupils by:
  - ensuring that pupils are routinely provided with opportunities to work at a higher standard across the curriculum
  - pupils are moved on at an appropriate rate with their learning.

Feedback from school leaders

With an increasing number of schools engaging in the School Effectiveness Review process we are now getting a very clear picture on how this is impacting on school improvement. For example, feedback from school leaders highlights the positive impact that training and participation has had in enabling them to further strengthen their capacity to provide robust self-evaluation and improvement planning procedures.

Schools that have participated in the process say that they have found the experience to both supportive and challenging, noting that all review evidence is bespoke to the school's systems and aims. Not only have the review outcomes served to make leaders more secure in their judgements but provided the schools with precise areas for development. Leaders have described the review approach as being a very collaborative process and great professional development for leaders at all levels.

Some of the comments made by headteachers who have participated in the DTSA school improvement programme for 2017 to 2018 are detailed below.

'Myself and my team fully embraced the experience taking every opportunity to learn and improve - all evidence was relevant and bespoke to our school systems and aims.'

'The knowledge of the team challenged me as a leader and that of my team which meant we could be proud of our achievements and learn from suggestions for improvement.'

'We were able to tailor this to focus on some of the key aspects of our current OFSTED judgement.'

'For me the team enabled the visit to be successful. Their approach was challenging but supportive and much was learnt by everyone during the visit.'

'The key to this kind of review is to have no 'surprises' and I felt that was the case.'

'It provided us with a valuable progress report for our RI judgement, it reassured us that we were working in the right direction to return to good.'

'Real support & challenge achieved - The review team consists of real people doing the day to day job and appreciate the pressures that involves.'

'The depth and accuracy of the report along with the feedback meeting to governors gave us a great deal of information to reflect upon.'

'The preciseness of the review report enabled the entire school stakeholders to celebrate in our achievement.'

'All findings reported had a clear evidence base and senior leaders were involved in every aspect that we wished to be, which supported the process.'

'It has given my leaders a refreshed sense of purpose, they valued working alongside other school leaders to evaluate their actions.'

'The informal coaching element that occurred alongside the review, has greatly benefited my middle leaders.'

'The review team provided an excellent balance of challenge and support and left areas for development with ideas and support to move them forward, where appropriate.'

'A very positive experience which I would recommend. Very good professional development and a great opportunity to talk through your SEF.'