

Albourne Church of England Primary School

23rd May 2024

Focus of Visit: Quality of Teaching, Early Years, Personal Development.

Albourne school continues an upward trajectory of improvement and is now showing some of the features of a truly high performing school. The main areas seen during my visit where this is most notable are the engagement of pupils in their learning, the progress of writing in pupils' books and the care that pupils show to each other. Sitting above these though is the cultural shift that has been brought about by the calm, but tenacious leadership shown by all members of the leadership team. This cultural shift has been led really well by the Head teacher, beginning with The Albourne Way, moving into the Vision documents and exemplified by the recently formed Diversity Ambassadors. There are developments for next year, but these have to be seen as part of an aggregation of marginal gains approach rather than any major shifts in practice.

The Early Years has undergone a number of changes over the last few years. There will be a new teaching team in Year R for September 2024. Whilst these changes have been appropriate, this approach can sometimes lead to practices not becoming embedded, particularly in terms of adult language use. The school should consider whether they can keep the September 2024 team in place for the following year as well to support the embedding of good Early Years practice. The school plans to take part in the Shrek training undertaken by other HET schools. This should support all adults in developing the language skills which underpin pupil development in this area of the school. The recent changes in environment in Early Years have been positive and this is allowing pupils to develop some really good initial learning behaviours. The pupils seen today were able to engage with activities for sustained periods of time and were purposeful in their approach to learning.

The learning walk showed that teaching is strong throughout the school. Classrooms were calm and purposeful and pupils were undertaking sustained writing activities. Progress was clearly evident in their books. Some of the pupils require support in order

to access the curriculum and this support is provided effectively. The cultural change is notable here because there was a purposeful and work like atmosphere in all of the classrooms we visited today. This allows the vast majority of pupils to persevere with their work with minimal disruption.

The English coordinator is right to target embedding the Albourne Way (IAACW) approach across the school. It has had a significant effect on the outcomes and progress of pupils' work already and the further embedding of the approach will ensure that all pupils in all classes see an uplift in their writing outcomes. The accurate levelling of writing remains a running area of discussion in the school and in the HET as well. That is not to suggest that the levelling is wrong, however the school should continue the efforts to achieve better accuracy in writing levelling to ensure that it does not reduce ambition, albeit subliminally, in teacher expectation.

Maths outcomes are strong across the school except for one distinct area; girls' attainment, particularly in years 2,3 and 4. The responses from a group of Year 6 girls did not give a conclusive picture of their view of Maths. They began by suggesting that they preferred the opportunities for creativity in Writing and Art, but concluded by saying they were motivated by arithmetic. They did though all agree that they enjoyed opportunities for discussing Maths with their peers. This aligns with the co-ordinators view that they will target problem solving and reasoning next year. The school may also like to consider whether the rapid recall of times tables should be targeted as a gateway to fluency in problem solving.

The school undertakes some very innovative approaches to ensuring that pupils are supported holistically. The focus on mental health is already having an impact within the staff contingent and there are plans to extend this to support both pupils and families. This builds on the existing ethos of the school that shows a high level of care for all members of the community. The Diversity Ambassadors were keen to share their views and talents during my visit. The creation of this group has enabled them to feel, not only part of the community, but a group of people who will have influence within the community to which they belong.

Data for Key Stage two SATs in 2024 is forecast to be above national with a particular strength in Exceeding. GLD in Early Years is forecast to be 70% with the national average last year at 67.2%. Phonics is forecast at 84%. Given this high phonics outcome and the significant progress in writing seen in year one, the school is building effective foundations for children on which they can build future learning. An area just to be aware of are the outcomes of pupil premium children. Whilst there are only a few children who fall into this category they should remain as a focus because of the national data that shows the poor outcomes for these children when they are in schools with low numbers of pupil premium children.

School leaders have dealt well with some very difficult issues, particularly most recently, often due to circumstances beyond their immediate control. This means that there will be some changes to leadership structures next year. I have no doubt that the cultural changes that are becoming embedded and the drive for improvement will remain unchanged because of the personal and professional commitment of the leadership team. Planning for 2024, the school may like to review how it will continue to focus on improving the quality of teaching in the classroom, with reduced leadership time, as this is the single most important factor in raising pupil outcomes.

Ends

Dr Justin Smith

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