



17th February 2020

Mrs Leigh Moore
Principal
Wodensborough Ormiston Academy
Hydes Road
Wednesbury
West Midlands
WS10 0DR

COE Review Date: 10th February 2020

Summary

Wodensborough Ormiston Academy continues to provide a fully inclusive provision within a context of very high levels of deprivation. Leaders have steered the Academy extremely well and have the support and commitment of skilled and dedicated staff. The reputation of the Academy has improved significantly and in the past few years, numbers on roll have reached the Pupil Admissions Number (PAN). This is due in large part to the excellent work of staff and leaders to improve outcomes, parental engagement and primary liaison.

The Academy is inclusive, not just in ethos and culture but also by virtue of its diverse population. Currently, there are 112 medical care plans, 7 child protection cases, 17 children in need cases, 27 active Early Help plans and 6 students undergoing single Assessment. Students receiving support from the Pupil Premium amount to 53% and over 22% have a SEND need. The demographics of the Sandwell borough have changed with an influx of International New Arrivals (INA). The Academy has responded positively and the student population which, two years ago comprised 69% White British now has 55% White British. In 2018, the Academy opened its WOA Welcome Centre, a provision for INA. As a result, there has been a two-fold increase in INA admitted into the Academy. The Academy works very closely with the Local Authority STEPS centre who place students new to the country into schools. This provision at the Academy is a shining example and the dedication and skill of those staff involved is of the highest order.

Last year, the Academy was granted approval by the Department for Education to establish a small sixth form for the most vulnerable students. It was a delight to visit the centre and speak to some of the sixth form students and their staff. The young people were engaged in their work when I arrived. In discussion, they were clearly confident and felt safe and supported. They spoke fondly of some of the experiences they had participated in, including a residential at the Frank Chapman Centre. The centre, like the Academy, was welcoming and very well run.

Award Offices

Inclusion Quality Mark Award

Ling House
173 Slieveboy Road
Claudy
BT47 4AS
United Kingdom

Contact

Tel. 028 7127 7857

Fax. 028 7127 7856

info@iqmaward.com

www.iqmaward.com

Company Registration No.

07748285

Inclusion Quality Mark (U.K.) Ltd

Company Registered Address:

Grove House
Lutyens Close
Chineham
Hampshire
RG24 8AG

The curriculum is flexible to allow a bespoke provision depending upon need and yet there is rigour, breadth and balance. This was a much-needed provision and the young people who access it are flourishing.

There have been several staffing changes since my last visit which have strengthened leadership and improved the quality of teaching. In a recent monitoring visit by HMI this month, it was observed that "The quality of teaching is now more consistent (and) Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge." During my tour of the school, I visited a number of classrooms and found them to be purposeful, with students engaged and participating in the learning activities. As HMI found, "Expectations of what pupils can achieve are now much higher" including those of the pupils themselves.

The permanent appointment of Heads of House is timely and has added fresh impetus to an already successful aspect of the school's enrichment programmes. In addition, the 'GROW' programme is designed to provide students with the opportunity to GAIN new skills, build RESILIENCE, have external OPPORTUNITIES and prepare for WORKING life. There are examples of the activities which form part of this programme on the Academy's excellent website, examples include a visit to Liverpool University and the Slave Museum, work with the Fire Service and a trip to Blackpool.

Student leadership is a strength and there are ample opportunities including membership of the Student Leadership team which meet fortnightly and invite members of the Senior Leadership Team to their meetings. The Academy has engaged with the #iwill campaign, Sandwell Youth Parliament, West Midlands Young Combined Authority and the Ormiston Academy Trust National Student Leadership Team. Through the Academy's #iwill project, students have reclaimed an area of wasteland on the site and turned it into a productive allotment.

I spent lunchtime meeting with a range of students from all year groups. The young people were welcoming, articulate and very proud of their school. We discussed a lot and the time flew by so quickly. There was warm respect and admiration for the staff at the Academy. Students appreciated the support they receive, and one told me that "Teachers are very supportive and ambitious for us" and "They genuinely care about us and genuinely want us to succeed." A Year 7 student described the transition process and spoke enthusiastically about the summer holiday programme which ran throughout the six week break at weekends, which was provided by staff from the Academy. Students from Year 9 and Year 10 who had recently joined the Academy spoke highly of how the staff had helped them settle quickly.

Over the past few years, there has been a concerted and determined effort to improve student outcomes and attendance and to reduce the behaviours that lead to exclusion. The reduction in persistent absence is significant and with the appointment of a new senior leader and Specialist Leader of Education for attendance, the capacity to continue this trend is abundant.

Having introduced the Raising Attainment of Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) programme in 2018, there is evidence of strong impact upon the outcomes of students in key stage 3. The programme aims to raise the expectations of disadvantaged students in the classroom. Results show that the gap has been closed by 2% in maths

and science, disadvantaged students outperformed their non-disadvantaged peers. Provision for higher attaining students, whilst not so impactful, nevertheless is well structured including the provision of three academic coaches who meet regularly with students.

The Academy leadership and staff are working together to build upon the impressive improvements made over recent years. Since my visit last year, there have been several staffing changes and new developments which bode well for the future. The Academy is rightly proud of its inclusive ethos and it is heartening to know that the integrity with which that ethos is upheld is strong despite the many challenges and pressures that leaders and staff face each day. Leaders and staff collectively are making a huge difference and they should be proud of their endeavours.

Wodensborough Ormiston Academy continues to move from strength to strength in terms of its inclusive practice and I recommend that the school retains its IQM Centre of Excellence Status and is reviewed again in 12 months. The next review will look closely at how the school has interacted with its Inclusion Cluster and promoted continuing outreach. Evidence of Cluster working will underpin the capacity for the school to maintain its Centre of Excellence status.

Assessor: Barry Carney

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:



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Joe McCann MBA NPQH
Director of Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd



Assessment Commentary on COE Action Plan

It was pleasing to observe that the action plan presented last year had been amended in line with my comments and that it contained more precise targets. The plan for the next twelve months is equally impressive.

Key amongst the targets for next year focusses on literacy. During my visit, I met with the recently appointed Director of Literacy and discussed some of the plans in place to improve mastery and comprehension. There are already some useful strategies in place including the Reading Dogs, one of whom I met and the Smart Start literacy focus. Leaders understand the fundamental importance of this strategy and recognise that it requires a coherent and consistent approach. The actions planned and those steps already taken should prove to be successful under the direction of the Director of Literacy and the advocacy of senior leaders.

The Academy is taking the opportunity to restructure SEND and during my visit leaders, with external support, were conducting a 'Deep Dive' into SEND provision. Given the numbers of students with additional needs it is quite appropriate to continue to review this provision.

Included in the plan for the next twelve months is the development of provision for social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH). With the appointment of an assistant principal with strategic responsibility for behaviour, intervention and inclusion, there is fresh impetus. Already, steps have been taken to move this forward and the establishment of Team Ambition is a positive way forward.

Further Developments Agreed After Discussion

The recommendations made by HMI in the recent monitoring visit were noted. In addition, it was agreed that in an effort to further reduce the proportion of students who are persistently absent, the Academy should consider targeting the parents of PA students for parenting skills classes such as those already running more generally in the Academy.

The Academy should continue its work with higher attaining students and should consider reintroducing the Maths Challenge.

The importance of the literacy strategy was discussed. Given that it has the potential to impact upon every single student, the potential of the overall impact it could have is not lost on leaders. It is vital that this becomes a whole school drive with every member of staff recognising its importance and the contribution that they can make.

Assessor: Barry Carney

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