

# TURNING AROUND A FAILING DEPARTMENT

## THE SITUATION

- \*Ofsted Inspection November 2016
- \*Science was identified as area needing improvement. "Lessons were not well matched to their learning needs". "Evidence in books shows too few chances to explain their knowledge and understanding" "Pupils did not make consistently good progress by the end of year 8 in Science" "School leaders have identified that outcomes are not good enough in Science".
- Dept. were not communicating, direction of the Dept. was unclear, T&L was inconsistent, student and whole school opinion of the Dept. was negative. Progress was too slow.
- \*I was asked to work with the dept., primarily with the HoD to look at the current position of the dept. and to formulate a plan of action based on the issues raised in the report. The HoD was very demotivated, had lost direction, improving performance of the dept. would have positive impact at individual, (student and staff) dept. and whole school level.

## ACTIONS

- \*Minuted weekly mentor sessions with Hod → coaching sessions to aid self evaluation and look at change of mindset. Minutes logged and sent to HoD / HT within 2 days of meetings, meetings focus on finding solutions.
- \*7 Week action plan devised to help prioritise, organise and make all actions purposeful and impactful. Action plan reviewed at every meeting, updated weekly, sent to HoD / HT. Action plan ties in with SIP.
- \*HoD mentor sessions introduced with dept. staff; whole dept meeting introduced and held weekly. Minutes sent to HT/mentor. Increased scrutiny.
- \*Weekly focus for dept. documentation to update or create.
- \*Annual (by month) schedule for dept. organisation and planning.
- \*Visits to other schools (Upper and Middle) arranged and minuted. Links with other science depts. made, good practice shared with other HoD's and SLT.
- \*Focused weekly learning walks to look at dept. progress, minuted / analysed and shared with dept. Encouraging transparency and open door policy in dept.
- \*SoW reviewed, improved and planning delegated more fairly. ARR reviewed and new initiatives trialled. Dept. staff consulted about dept. decisions.
- \*Student voice - survey of students to gauge opinion at beginning & end of process.

## IMPACT

- \* Quality of teaching improved from 33.3% good or better to 66.6% good or better.
- \*Behaviour in lessons has improved, evidence in books shows more rapid student progress in all learner groups and improved ATL. Students feel lessons have improved.
- \*HoD felt fully supported and that they had someone to bounce ideas off. Amount of complaining in mentor meetings reduced significantly by the end of the process. HoD's attitude towards the support process, their dept. staff, SLT and long term vision for the dept. all improved greatly.
- \*HoD expectations of dept. performance now more in line with whole school expectations.
- \*Trust within the dept. team improved, staff now feel more personal responsibility to improve T&L, working more under their own initiative. There is still much room for improvement though.
- \*Staff and students feel more confident about the dept. Feedback from parents is also positive and they feel things have improved. (conversations at parents evenings)
- \*One member of the team has secured a post at another school as a result of the process, creating an exciting opportunity to build up subject specialism in the dept.
- \*HoD now more organised regarding documentation, time management and prioritising tasks.
- \*HoD keen to work more proactively with other depts. within the school and to introduce more cross curricular opportunities for staff and students.

## NEXT STEPS

- \* Appoint new team member.
- \*All SoW planned fully for Sept.
- \*100% good or better teaching.
- \*Sustained scrutiny.
- \*High expectations at all times.

"Science lessons have improved, it feels like we're learning more" Yr 7

"I'm enjoying Science now, I even look forward to the lessons." Yr 7

"I've just had a really productive meeting with X, they seem so much more proactive" Staff member.

"As a parent, I'm so glad things have improved, (my child) is so much more enthusiastic about science now! Parent of Yr 5

"I love the fact we're doing more experiments" Yr 8.

**"A CANDLE LOSES NOTHING BY LIGHTING ANOTHER CANDLE" JAMES KELLER**

**"THE SECRET OF CHANGE IS TO FOCUS ALL OF YOUR ENERGY, NOT ON FIGHTING THE OLD, BUT ON BUILDING THE NEW" SOCRATES**

