

Nisai Virtual School: School Improvement Partner visit

09/10/2023

Methodology

Lesson observation, discussion with teachers and curriculum leads and SMT. Review of assignments and quality documentation.

The Quality of Education

Grade: 1 (Outstanding)

Key Findings

- The **highly ambitious and carefully adapted curriculum** ensures that students, particularly those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and those who are medically frail, gain the **knowledge and cultural capital** necessary for their future success.
- The virtual delivery model is a **significant strength**, providing bespoke, flexible, and inclusive access to education for pupils who have previously struggled to engage in traditional settings. In the sessions observed teachers used Adobe Connect with skill and fluency, successfully engaging most students.
- Teaching is consistently **expert and highly effective**. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and a profound understanding of how to use online tools and techniques to secure deep learning and address misconceptions instantly. This is greatly enhanced by the effective use of the polling function in the digital platform to check student understanding and confidence levels throughout the observed sessions.
- The identification of pupils' needs and the subsequent planning and provision are **exemplary**. Pupils with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans make **exceptional progress** from their varied starting points. The production of "One Page Profiles" is carried out to a high standard, each containing relevant background information readily available to teachers who know the students very well.
- **The comprehensive quality management system** ensures that the academy's self-assessment is **reliable and accurate**, successfully supporting the sustained continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

Detailed Analysis: Quality of Education (Intent, Implementation, Impact)

Curriculum Intent

The curriculum is **ambitious and meticulously designed** to be fully accessible through the virtual environment. Leaders have correctly identified the unique barriers faced by the pupil cohort—including ASD, severe anxiety, medical conditions, and previous negative school experiences—and have created a curriculum that is both **academically rigorous and deeply supportive of well-being**. The use of ability-based groupings, rather than age-based, ensures the curriculum content is pitched accurately to challenge and secure progress for every student. Teacher feedback in lessons is relentlessly positive and encouraging and where correction is required is delivered thoughtfully, giving clear guidance to improvement.

Curriculum Implementation (Teaching and Learning)

Teaching is very strong across all key stages and subjects.

- **Expert Pedagogy and Continuous Improvement:** The academy's commitment to continuous improvement is underpinned by a **robust and comprehensive quality management system**. The rigorous induction of new staff is particularly impressive resulting in a confident and competent workforce combining strong subject knowledge with fluency in digital media. The resources used in the observed sessions were of a uniformly high-quality engaging student interest and expertly differentiated. In one lesson observed this enabled the full participation of students whose ages ranged from eleven to twenty-two, demonstrating the clear benefits of virtual access to the curriculum.
- A highly effective cycle of **teacher observation** is the cornerstone of quality monitoring. This practice is tailored to the virtual environment, focusing on the **effectiveness of digital differentiation**, the use of interactive tools to check understanding, and the maintenance of a strong teacher presence.
- Although there is a degree of standardisation in the approach to teaching and learning there is ample room for creativity and individuality, one teacher observed used humour to immediately engage the students in a highly effective way.
- **Reliable Self-Assessment:** Data from these precise observations, which specifically track the implementation of **SEND strategies** and EHC plan requirements, generate a **detailed and highly reliable Self-Assessment Report (SAR)**. The conclusions of the SAR are rigorous and accurate, confirming the strength of the provision and correctly identifying comprehensive and nuanced areas for further development. This high-fidelity self-evaluation is a key driver for sustained excellence.
- **Adaptation for SEND:** The quality of teaching for pupils with additional needs is **Outstanding**. Teachers seamlessly integrate individualised support strategies—informed by detailed pupil profiles—into their live instruction, leading to immediate and precise intervention.

Curriculum Impact

The school's provision has an **exceptionally positive impact** on pupils' academic outcomes and readiness for the next stage of their education and lives.

- **Exceptional Progress:** Pupils, including those with EHC plans, **make rapid and sustained progress** in their knowledge and skills across the curriculum. For many, this progress represents significant acceleration given their previously fragmented educational history.
- **Destination Data:** An overwhelming majority of pupils progress successfully to relevant post-16 and post-18 destinations, including further education and employment. This is a crucial indicator of the school's success in providing the **cultural capital and confidence** needed for independent living, demonstrating that the quality systems effectively secure positive outcomes for all.

Graeme Pyle, School Improvement Partner