

THE MEADS PRIMARY SCHOOL, LUTON

‘WHERE VALUES LIVE’



The Meads is a large (500+ pupils), three form entry primary school, situated in the north of the vibrant, multi-cultural town of Luton. When I started what was my first Headship here in September 2010, the school was in the early stages of an extensive expansion project, intended to double its size. There had been a lot of upheaval in terms of leadership over the previous year, with a long term head replaced with an interim and a decline in standards and reputation. The previous two inspections had rated us as ‘satisfactory’ and there was a need for stability and a new ethos; what had formerly been a well-respected and successful school had rather lost its sense of identity.

The first major initiative implemented was the introduction of Values to the school. Dr. Neil Hawkes, ‘father’ of Values education, recommends when schools seek to become values-based, they involve all stakeholders in creating a two year programme of monthly values such as ‘respect’, ‘tolerance’ and ‘honesty’, each introduced at the start of the month in an assembly and featured in displays across the school, and then taught, talked about and referred to throughout the month. This quickly became embedded and has formed the foundation of everything we have done ever since. Together with work done with the staff on ‘The Fish Philosophy’, espousing the benefits choosing one’s attitude, having fun and

remaining positive no matter what, the values-based approach began to grow a school in which everyone took responsibility for being a role model. We now have a happy, motivated and enthusiastic staff who are keen to do the best they can for the children, and pupils who are ambassadors for their community in terms of the way they conduct themselves both inside and outside of school.

Having established the right ethos, the challenge was then to address the legacy of declining standards. Staff INSET on establishing the right learning environment, the importance of effective marking and feedback, good and outstanding lessons, together with firm expectations around assessment and data ensured that teachers knew how to move children’s learning forward. The establishing of a team of dedicated Teaching Assistants to focus on behaviour meant that disruption in lessons was kept to a minimum. Next we sought to engage the parents, initially through the IMPACT in Learning initiative, based on the work of Charles DeForges around the potential advantages the full engagement of parents with their children’s work at home





can bring, and later through signing up to the Achievement for All 3As programme, which takes parental engagement a step further. Although not cheap, the Achievement for All 3As approach has enabled us to target specific groups of under achieving pupils as well as to put responsibility for the progress of all children firmly with the teacher. Unique initiatives such as The Structured Conversation have meant that parents of targeted children have a significant voice in their children's education and the measures put in place to ensure their well-being, and the impact on results for these pupils has been marked.

The final part of the jigsaw was the introduction of Assertive Mentoring, an intervention designed to fully involve the child in the monitoring of their progress and the setting of their targets, initially implemented with children in receipt of the Pupil Premium Grant. The creation of a team of part-time teachers and Higher Level Teaching Assistants - the 'Premium Team' - has enabled us to deliver this intervention to Pupil Premium children across first years 5 and 6, and subsequently across the whole school – we are

now extending this to the lowest achieving 20% of children too. Results indicate that children from the most deprived backgrounds are on track to achieve as well and in many cases better than their peers.

The Meads' journey over the last 5 years has been at times difficult and often challenging and not everyone who started with us has reached the current point - but it has never been anything less than exciting. The school now benefits from a distributed leadership structure that enables shared decision making and a degree of autonomy which engages all teachers in the school improvement process. Although we face on-going issues around mobility and EAL, the school is now graded as 'good' in all areas; standards in reading and maths are above the national average across the school, with writing standards matching national levels. Our aim now is to create a self-sustaining culture of self-improvement and as such we will be focusing on Lesson Study and further improving our formative assessment practises this year in order to continue our trajectory towards outstanding.

