

## **ENGAGE TRUST – BOARD REPORT**

### **PINETREE SCHOOL LINK DIRECTOR REPORT – MARCH 2017**

#### **Introduction**

The next visit of the Ofsted inspector is due this term - I still believe the outcome remains uncertain. Were he to observe the behaviour that I saw during a monitoring visit last week, I suspect the school would remain in special measures. If he turns up on a calmer day, the outcome might be more hopeful: behaviour remains my area of greatest concern, being still unpredictable and difficult to manage.

As this is being written shortly before an IEB meeting, I do not have an up to date data set. If the relevant report is available before the board meeting, I will include it with this document to allow directors access to any data they may wish for. However, raw data is examined by standards committee, by the IEB and (if we ever get it running) the board I&P committee: I do not believe that it has a place in this report. My aim is to provide the directors with my considered assessment of the schools progress, and to alert the board to what I consider to be continuing areas of concern.

#### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

While the departure of the Dr Madhlangobe has been managed efficiently, and with no mention of the school or trust in the press coverage, the circumstances which led to his leaving are now widely known, and have been used by some students and parents in their criticism of the school. It seems probable that the Ofsted inspector will be aware of what has happened, and will be checking to see what effect it has had on the school.

Sue Kirrage, having stepped back into the position of interim head, has had to deal with several areas on concern, where she has felt that her predecessor had not maintained the initial standards set for the school. This has related to the implementation of the behaviour policy, to the preparation and use of individual learning plans, and to some aspects of staff well-being. These were not issues which had been raised by the Ofsted inspector.

The current leadership arrangements, although not permanent, have enabled a more intense focus on those areas still requiring improvement. However, we have not yet clarified the necessary long-term arrangements, without which the future viability of the school remains in doubt. It is important that we can show that our plans will allow us to effectively manage the school at capacity, without the extra leadership currently in place.

At the end of last term, a report by the DfE advisor, who has supported us since we took over, raised concerns about the capacity of the IEB to provide effective monitoring (though this has not been raised by Ofsted, nor in previous reports by the advisor). We have responded to this by “borrowing” Cath Catt from the SSSfN governing body, and by setting up a Standards Committee to provide more detailed scrutiny of the data than has been possible previously.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Mark Cresswell has taken the lead in improving teaching and learning in the school, with the introduction of learning ladders, and a system of monitoring and scrutiny to identify weaknesses and enable staff to improve their skills. With several new teaching staff joining the school in January, including some on temporary or supply contracts, it may still be too early to provide sufficient data to show that these changes have improved standards – though initial indications do seem positive.

The level of student engagement in learning remains too variable, with some showing little or no interest in participating in class.

The very recent decision to stop using external providers (for which I have so far had two contradictory explanations) will result in some of the more difficult students having to spend more time in the classroom environment, presenting extra challenges to teaching staff. I am not yet able to assess the impact of this.

## **Personal development, behaviour, and welfare**

Since the recent half-term, Sandra Govender has joined the leadership team, taking particular responsibility for this area. The credit scheme has been improved, and this does appear to be having an effect. However, the weakness of the scheme is that once a student has lost credits because of an incident of poor behaviour, they seem to feel that there is then no point in behaving well for the rest of the week, as they will not be able to obtain any reward at the end.

Unfortunately, there are still incidents of very poor behaviour, which is worrying as we have an inspector who has shown that he places great emphasis on this. Students' personal plans have been clarified, and now show clearly the extent to which all of our students fall into the SEND categories. This should enable a better understanding of individual needs, and of the causes of poor behaviour.

Attendance has been slowly improving, and latest figures show that the school is doing slightly better than the average for alternative provision in Norfolk, and considerably better than the national average.

## **Conclusion**

It has now been two years since we were invited to take over TAPFS. I have yet to be convinced that the school can achieve a good standard, while operating at capacity and within budget. This may only be possible if we carefully select which students we admit to the school, rejecting those likely to be most disruptive (as we have already had to do when we removed from the school a small number of difficult pupils).

Chris Spencer

March 2017