7th June 2020

Mr Abid Butt
Principal
Lyndon School
Daylesford Road
Solihull
West Midlands
B92 8EJ

Date of Assessment: 3rd June 2020

This is the first part of a two-day assessment and took place via Zoom. I hope to visit the school in the Autumn Term to meet groups of students and parents and a few Governors as well as catching up with many of those I met on my virtual tour. I have looked at the school website to gather more information for my report. My thanks to the Principal and his staff for being so welcoming. Thanks also to Lizzy Ford who organised my virtual visit and prepared the paperwork needed for the assessment.

Summary

Lyndon School formally joined Summit Learning Trust (previously known as Ninestiles Academy Trust) on the 1st of September 2015. Although it is a larger than average school with 1120 students aged between 11-16 it aims to operate on a small school model ensuring that every student is well known and where their individual needs are met. The school serves a varied population from Solihull and Birmingham. Students are drawn from approximately 40 primary feeder schools, with a large majority arriving from the neighbouring Local Authority of Birmingham.

Prior attainment data for the all year groups suggest that students arrive either at or slightly below the national average with the exception of the current Year 9 and Year 8 for whom levels of literacy and numeracy were below that of their peers on entry.

The school profile shows that the proportion of students entitled to FSM within the last 6 years has increased year on year and is now above the national average and the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups are increasing and currently stands at 40%. The largest pupil group comprises White British (60%). The proportion of students with SEN is broadly average.

Inclusion is integral to the values and principles promoted by the school and the Summit Academy Trust. The school has been awarded the Inclusion Quality Mark’s Inclusive School Award on five previous occasions. This is something they are very proud of.
The school has suffered from difficult Ofsted inspections over the last four years and is currently graded as Requiring Improvement although the overall effectiveness of the Leadership and Management was recently graded as Good. The most recent self-evaluation completed by the school, confirmed by the LA and Trust reviews, grade the school as a good school.

I spent some time during my virtual visit speaking to the Principal and was able to confirm his total commitment to inclusion. He spoke positively about the support he and the school receive from the Summit Academy Trust. The Principal told me he has always worked in challenging schools and challenging contexts and he is a firm believer in local education. The Principal spoke about his moral responsibility as a school leader and the need to lead inclusively and with moral conviction. There is an absence of ego when talking to the Principal. He does not see himself as a great saviour or ‘hero head’ but rather as a team leader who brings others with him. Talking to a large number of his staff, it is clear that he has been successful in this aim.

The school is built on strong relationships between staff and SLT and between staff and students and staff and parents and the community. These relationships come from the top in the way the Principal shows respect for students, parents and staff at all levels. In the past staffing the school was difficult and this led to problems in terms of moving students and the school as a whole forward. Staffing has now stabilised and teachers generally stay between two or three years although increasingly some stay longer and develop their careers at Lyndon School and within the Trust. Excellent professional development and being part of an academy trust has helped with this.

The numbers of students admitted every year is going up as the school becomes more popular with parents/carers and this is a key indicator of success. The Principal is a mentor for a new headteacher in the City and he plays an active part in supporting other heads where he can. As one of the most experienced headteachers in the City he is in much demand!

The current lockdown and school closure have presented many challenges but the Principal says they were well prepared and have been able to switch to on-line learning very quickly. The Academy Trust provided additional Chrome Books for students who had no access to technology at home so that no child is left behind. Staff keep in regular contact with students and their parents and those who are deemed more vulnerable or where there are safeguarding concerns are contacted more frequently as are those with special educational needs. Year 11 students are in regular contact with teachers and their destinations post 16 confirmed. The school has been planning to receive Year 10 students back for some face-to-face sessions with their teachers from next week and teachers are working on developing a Recovery Curriculum for next year when all students (hopefully) return to school. The Principal and SLT and governors are aware that previous priorities and plans may no longer be appropriate and they can’t plan more than 100 days ahead. Whilst this is difficult, the school is very positive it can work together and move forward into the next academic year well prepared to support students and staff to readjust to a ‘new normal’.

The Principal made it very clear that he considers staff work-life balance as very important and he does what he can to ensure that staff are fully supported to be
effective in their roles whilst maintaining a good quality of life. During the lockdown the Principal and his team have kept in close touch with staff whilst they were working at home. Their welfare and the welfare of his students are his concern.

I was able to speak to a large number of staff during my virtual visit and both teachers and support staff told me about their positive experience working at the school. Performance Management and Appraisal is in place for all members of staff and everyone is part of a team. Line Management processes are in place to support and challenge staff and these are very effective in ensuring efficiency and consistency of expectations. Staff at all levels are very clear about the school’s inclusive vision, its policy and its practice and they take ownership of it.

Based on this online assessment I am of the opinion that the school meets the standard required by the Inclusion Quality Mark’s Inclusive School Award. There are only minor areas requiring development and the school is aware of these. I look forward to verifying this during my one day visit at a later stage.

Assessor: Kenny Frederick

Findings confirmed by Inclusion Quality Mark (UK) Ltd:

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