

T and L Updates 2013 - Summer 2015



Alcester
Academy

Home Learning Updates (June 2015)

Following the terrific success of the publication of Year 7 and 8 home learning on to the VLE for parents and students, the roll out for Key Stage Four has now begun. Governors were keen to hear of the developments at the June 'Standards Sub Committee' and we all look forward to other students benefitting from this initiative in the coming months.

Action Research – Looking at the Achievement of Boys (June 2015)

The staff were inspired to hear the great work that had gone on throughout the year by Miss Sacco, Mr Rossiter and Miss Taylor as part of their research into raising the Achievement of Boys in the classroom. This had included work around Growth Mindset (Carol Dweck) as developmental work from the SWEP training day led by Alistair Smith. The staff were encouraged to consider further the strategies that were used in the classroom in order to support boys.

Promoting Literacy (June 2015)

Mrs Hoskin was keen to launch an initiative with all staff in order to further spark students' love of reading 'Every Child, Every Book'. The 'Drop It And Read' project in collaboration with research from trainee teachers has proven to be a huge success with Year 8 and 9 students.

This idea followed literacy 'hot spots' throughout the year designed around teachers and additional adults supporting Year 11s with exam questions and phrasing.

Whole School and Staff Work Scrutiny (April 2015)

Staff took part in a CPD session designed to review good practise examples of marking and feedback to inform student progress. The session was concluded with the collation of ideas for best practise and thoughts on how to further develop marking and feedback in subject areas. This was quickly followed by an SEND trawl (June 2015) and a review of students who were eligible for Catch Up Funding (June 2015). Work Scrutiny features regularly on the CPD schedule for 2015/16.

Twitter Launch for Staff @AlcesAcade_TandL (April 2015)

Still very much in its infancy, the academy are keen to show case great ideas and share the latest research on teaching and learning with colleagues. Are you following?

TeachEd@Polesworth School (April 2015)

Many congratulations to Miss Sacco for being invited to speak to NQTs and trainees about teaching. Thank you for giving up your Saturday to do this!

Year 6 Transition Project (March 2015)

The Academy were delighted to work in collaboration with the Education Psychology Service for Warwickshire on a funded project designed at taking away the worries faced by parents/carers and Year 6 children in the summer before their transition to secondary school. The project took the form of 3 additional academy based sessions involving SLT and key staff working along-side the Senior Educational Psychologist; Dawn Preece. It also included parents/carers participating in a real Year 7 English lesson! Parents told us:

The sessions have made me feel more at ease. I can help him be prepared for the start of school.

I have brought my child to sessions and he has enjoyed and benefited from them.

These visits have helped to see the school again and the lesson was a great insight.

Feeling easier about the 'big' change.

You have answered many questions I have had.

My twins have both got their worries and how they deal with the transition worries me. But this course has really helped me lessen these worries.

"What new information made a difference"... Information from Y7 pupils <----- please note, this young lady has autism so therefore a very concerned parent. I cannot identify the child myself but it

is a young girl whose needs require attention from day 1. Session 3 was the first which parent and child attended so I will have a stab at identifying the young lady through a process of elimination and will let you know if I discover anything.

Talking to teachers, Headteacher, parents and pupils has settled my mind. The school has a very friendly welcoming feel.

Feeling more informed and positive since coming to these sessions.

My son is excited about joining AA!

Most Able Research – Ofsted (March 2015)

Mr Seager led a session to encourage all teaching staff and additional adults in the classroom to consider the level of challenge offered to students at KS3. Working towards the new Year 6 intake for September 2015, Subject Leaders also began to discuss how effectively information was used in order to support new learners. This followed the excellent transition work completed by the English Department last summer in collaboration with all feeder primary schools where the standardisation of students' work took place. All subject areas now have a 'Most Able' statement in place to go alongside the Academy policy. Thank you to the Art team for sharing their ideas with the rest of the staff.

Pupil Premium Review – Richard Sutton (February 2015)

The Academy was delighted to welcome Mr Richard Sutton to the academy along with a colleague Head teacher from a nearby Coventry School in order to participate in the Pupil Premium Review. The Review was both informative and inspiring with positive strategies established in order to further develop.

Alistair Smith @Joint SWEP training day (January 2015)

A fabulous training day on growth mindset at Stratford School with other South Warwickshire Colleagues thinking about how to maximise learning by having an open mindset. Congratulations to those staff involved in delivering the afternoon sessions for other colleagues.

SEND Consultant Visit (December 2014)

The Academy commissioned a review of the provision for those children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Christine Murrall visited the academy for the day. During this Review the work of TAs and teachers was examined along with an audit of the systems in place to support the progress of learners.

Teach Meet Professional Development (September 2015)

Many thanks to colleagues working across schools by attending the 'Teach Meet' opportunities at Worcester University and Stratford School over this academic year.

New Staff Appointments (May 2014)

@JustMaths. New colleagues appointed as Leaders in order to continue to raise the bar in Maths teaching across the school. We are delighted that these appointments also bring to the academy training opportunities in collaboration with Edexcel along with numerous other school to school avenues used to lead best practise and share ideas.

The Learning Pathway Launch (Summer 2014)

Staff at the academy were privileged to begin some training around the components that create effective learning environments; 'The Learning Pathway'. This began a review for all professionals of their teaching pedagogy and classroom practise. 'Open Lessons' have also helped to create an open door policy across the academy where colleagues can share ideas with each other based around each area of the Pathway.

Spring Term 2014

Training continues for Teaching Assistants at Alcester Academy in the areas of Access Arrangements from Early Intervention Services and Social Story use from IDS. Teaching Assistants have also spent time at Bidford Primary School shadowing support staff in order to get further development.

All teaching staff and TAs continue specific training on how to support students more effectively who suffer from Dyslexic traits and Working Memory concerns. This training feeds in to the revival of Quality First Teaching at Wave 1 in light of the new SEND Code of Practice 2014. Anita Devi, Educational Consultant recently visited the Academy where staff were joined by neighbouring SENCOs and TAs from other schools to hear about the implications of this first hand.

April 2014

David Turner's Visit – Lead Inspector and Director of SIA (School Improvement Associates)

David returned to the Academy to conduct training with Heads of Subject around whole school leadership and improvement. During this review, David led a CPD session on Active Questioning with all teaching staff.

Teachers reported:

'A thoroughly useful session which provided me with realistic ideas of how I can embed these techniques in to my lessons. It has enthused me to adapt my own techniques.'

'Provoked a lot of new ideas.'

'It was really useful that the course was presented in the manner that reflected the message of active questioning.'

'A really focussed session that has given me some good signposts to keep my questioning effective.'

'Very useful.'

'Useful ideas and a refreshing CPD session!'

David will continue to be a regular visitor to the academy.

February 2014

We are delighted to inform you that one of the Academy's NQTs was recently invited to speak at Worcester University regarding her experiences on placement at Alcester Academy (Summer 13) and since as an NQT in our MFL department.

Several teachers have volunteered to lead training sessions at the Partnership Plus Conference in March '14 on 'Effective marking and feedback'.

Three teachers have recently been involved in interviewing trainees at various educational providers in the area and they have been invited back to contribute to this process using their critical subject expertise.

The school is currently working along-side the Tudor Grange group of schools on several exciting projects. The first of these is linked to the development of the History Curriculum within local primary schools. Mr Rossiter is leading on this project. The first meeting of this group of teachers was recently held at Alcester Academy. Mrs Duffy and the MFL team are working along-side Tudor Grange Solihull, Myton School and Studley High School on an 'Europa Day' designed to encourage the speaking of modern foreign language. Year 10 Language leaders from Alcester Academy have a pivotal role during this day in supporting the teaching of Year 8 gifted and talented students from partner schools. Finally, our newly qualified teachers are working in conjunction with Tudor Grange on a coaching programme to further develop areas of teaching.

During February, the entire teaching staff at Alcester Academy visited Stratford School along with colleagues from other South Warwickshire schools (SWEP) in order to hear keynote speaker Mike Hughes speak on 'Information Driven Dialogue'. Mike is a well respected speaker within the educational circuit. This has also provided an invaluable opportunity for staff to network across schools. Leaders from SWEP schools were provided with an opportunity to hear Mike speak on the 'Leadership of Teaching and Learning.'

Sharing Good Practice to Improve Teaching October 2013

Staff at the Academy thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity recently to join together with other South Warwickshire schools in order to share good practice. Amongst those leading sessions were the Art team from Alcester Academy leading on how to develop Effective Marking and Feedback, Miss Cross on Strategies for teaching MFL and the English Team delivering training on Oracy based learning.

Reviews

The Academy continues to Review essential areas related to teaching and learning in order to develop the school further. Throughout the academic year 2013/14 the staff have engaged in a Section 5 Ofsted Inspection and a consequential HMI visit. As a result of these official visits, the focus of training this year has been around differentiation, additional educational needs, use of classroom data and the role of teaching assistants. A Review of Key Stage 3 AEN (Additional Educational Needs) provision took place in November 2013 and this will be followed up after the re-launch of IEPs across the school very shortly with a KS4 AEN Review. During February, the School Improvement Partner, David Turner visited the school to conduct an internal Review around the progress of students in receipt of Pupil Premium. This involved the observation of lessons, work scrutiny, interrogation of data systems used for tracking progress and discussions with both key leaders and Governors.

Two development Reviews have taken place in February 2013 and May 2013 at Alcester Academy. The purpose of these Reviews was for teaching staff at similar career stages to work along-side each other in small groups in order to develop teaching practise further.

Teaching colleagues at the Academy said:

'It was really interesting for me to have the chance to observe other people.'

'Thoroughly enjoyed the experience.'

'What I delivered and saw was typical of the classrooms I visited which was fab.'

'Working in a less formal atmosphere with colleagues was inspiring.'

'It was good to be able to pick the group to allow me to work on specific areas of issue with two new pairs of eyes watching and picking things that I had missed.'

'Positive feedback highlighted strengths rather than focusing on negatives.'

'Real sense of support from colleagues that are like minded in terms of subject area. Very open and honest dialogue.'

'An excellent week. A more informal approach that still had great impact. Got to work with staff that I do not normally mix with.'

'Watching exceptionally good lessons by 'new' staff that were exciting and vibrant and gave me great ideas for my own.'

February 2013 Review

Coaching

Throughout the academic year 2012-13 a group of dedicated teaching staff within the Academy have piloted a Coaching programme designed to inspire other teachers in their classrooms. The Coaching staff have dedicated quality time to sessions. In these sessions, teaching practise is disseminated and the pedagogy of outstanding teaching is investigated further. The G.R.O.W model has been used as an inspiration for this work.

Due to it's value with staff, the Academy will increase the time dedicated to Coaching during the academic year 2013-14.

'I have found that coaching has enabled me to become a more reflective practitioner. I feel that I am more aware of my strengths as well as my areas for development. Being part of the coaching group has helped me to develop skills which allow me to listen more carefully to the ideas of others and guide others instead of directing them. I have had the privilege of developing a trusting relationship with a colleague outside of my team.'

Thoughts on Coaching from Alcester Academy Teaching Staff

'The coaching process has been a great help. Having a colleague to support you and at the same time to challenge you to improve has been a thoroughly positive experience'

'The coaching team have worked to create a supportive ethos where staff want to improve their teaching and drive the Academy forwards.'

'Since being asked to be a part of the coaching group in September 2012, I have felt a significant shift in the way that teaching and learning conversations begin and evolve. Before being involved in the initiative, I would often feel nervous about discussing things that weren't working as well as I would have liked for me and I would much prefer a discussion about solutions rather than someone actively watching me teach and working through solutions together through the medium of an open dialogue. The ethos that coaching brings to the school is one of trust and honesty which can only be a positive thing as we work together to deliver the best we can to the students in our Academy. I can honestly say that coaching within the school has dramatically changed my approach to teaching and learning as a group we realise that we can all share the 'best bits' from one another. Coaching has given me the confidence to actively seek solutions even if that means having someone listen to me sound out my ideas. On the side of professional development, coaching has given me the opportunity to learn from those around me and to gain honest advice about how to develop myself both personally and professionally.'

'Coaching has 'open doors' to other departments and staff that we do not often get the chance to build a relationship with. It is interesting seeing how other subjects are taught and it is a way of sharing good practice throughout the school. It feels like a closer and more approachable staff environment is being created within the school.'

Lesson Observation For Real

The Academy hosted a visit from Andy Swallow. Lead HMI in February 2013. During this visit, Miss Harris; Teacher of English led a Year 9 lesson in front of the staff at the Academy in order to illustrate how to meet the needs of all learners within a classroom situation.

Following the lesson, a positive critique was led by Andy Swallow regarding the good aspects of the learning illustrated and the 'change' that happened within the time allotted for the learners.

The Academy engages with the 'Partnership Plus' consortium of schools for other similar development opportunities for staff throughout the academic year.

Literacy and Numeracy

The Academy has appointed co-ordinators of Literacy and Numeracy Through the Curriculum to help drive standards within these areas across all subjects.

