

Committee:	Children's Services Scrutiny Committee
Date:	21st November 2011
Title of Report:	The Bishop Bell – Causeway Partnership Final Report
By:	Director of Children's Services
Purpose of Report:	To report the impact of the Partnership on the outcomes for young people at The Causeway School

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee is recommended to welcome the successful outcomes from the Bishop Bell Causeway partnership and to consider in particular how the local authority can work to extend the benefits to other East Sussex schools.

1. Introduction

1.1. This report gives a very brief summary of the progress made during the 34 months of the Bishop Bell Causeway Partnership from its creation in November 2008 to August 2011. It evidences the transformation of a school which has had endemic underperformance, low attainment, unpopularity and behaviour issues. Under the Executive Team, and in partnership with Bishop Bell School, it was named by the Government as the fifth most improved school in England in January 2011, is now seeing its first ever appeals by parents for places there and in the words of the School Improvement Partner in his visit in May 2011, *"The evidence at this visit was one of excellence. There was a clear can do spirit in the school shared by students and teachers. In every class all students were actively on task, engaging enthusiastically with their work. Pupils seemed happy in all environments"*. T S Boatwright, Executive Headteacher, Bishop Bell Causeway Partnership.

2. Position November 2008

1.1. The Causeway School, despite major support for years, had made little progress and the East Sussex School Improvement Service identified problems across four key areas of the School's work:

1. Curriculum Provision: not meeting the needs of learners and recruitment issues resulting in problems staffing a quality curriculum, especially in relation to mathematics and English.
2. Quality of Teaching & Learning: poor quality teaching, especially in mathematics, and assessment not enabling students to progress well.
3. Leadership & Management Capacity: there were issues around capacity and quality of management and management systems, at all levels, exacerbated by high staff turnover.
4. Inclusion: a wide range of related problems identified, including:
 - a) Poor parental engagement.
 - b) Low popularity of the school leading to under subscription.
 - c) High student absence, and persistent absence, rates.
 - d) Poor engagement with external agencies, including limited use of the CAF¹.
 - e) Poor behaviour, leading to high levels of exclusion and bullying.
 - f) Special Education Needs not well integrated into strategic leadership.

In November 2008, the Executive Team from Bishop Bell School agreed fifteen targets with the Local Authority and the progress made against them is summarised below.

3. Progress Against Targets

3.1 Curriculum and Attainment: Though no target was set for curriculum provision, considerable, and rapid progress was made to put in place a curriculum which supported student achievement. Just a year after the Partnership was created, OFSTED said, *"The curriculum is good and strongly supports the current improvements evident in pupils' attainment and in the quality of their learning...The range of available qualifications is impressive."*

¹ Common Assessment Framework

3.2 Attainment had been low even when compensation was made for the ability profile, and background of students. The school had always fallen far short of its FFTB² estimates and CVA³ had always been in the lowest 20% for schools nationally (below 990). Table 1 gives the FFT estimates⁴, FFTB estimates, targets set and actual 2011 results. It can be seen that last year's results were a huge improvement on the estimated ones and even significantly higher than the targets set by the LA.

Table 1

Performance Indicator	FFT Estimate	FFTB	Target Set	Actual Result
% 5A*-C including En & Ma	18%	25%	45%	57%
% 5A*-C	44%	40%	66%	96%

3.3 Overall CVA for the whole cohort: In 2006, 2007 and 2008 CVA was 979, 987 and 986 respectively, varying between the 91st and 82nd percentiles of schools nationally. The LA target was to exceed a CVA of 1020 by 2011. In 2010, after less than two years, CVA was 1037, in the top 4% nationally. Figures are not available for 2011. Non-Contextualised Value Added, though not set as a target, is more in line with the Government's new measurement of progress and ignores background factors. Even against that measure, huge progress has been made from figures of 959, 976 and 974 (in the 88th to 95th percentiles) for 2006, 2007 and 2008 respectively, to 1024 in the 11th percentile in 2010.

3.4 CVA for groups of students, especially vulnerable groups: There were concerns about the support for six vulnerable groups of pupils⁵. In 2008, three of those groups, including both SEN groups and low ability girls had CVAs below 990 and none had CVAs significantly above 1000. The Partnership was set the target for all six vulnerable groups to have CVAs higher than 1000 by 2011. This was exceeded very significantly a year by 2010. In 2010, all vulnerable groups had CVAs above 1025, with those students on SEN School Action having a CVA of 1042, in the top two percent nationally, and those on SEN School Action Plus and Statemented with CVA of 1030, again very high.

3.5 There has been transformational improvement in the attainment of vulnerable groups, especially those with SEN whose CVA has risen from 990 to 1030 or higher in just two years (approximately from the lowest performing 20% in the Country to the highest 5%). Another target was that all groups of students⁶ should by 2011 achieve a CVA of at least 990 and none should be significantly underachieving. In 2010, every group gained over 1000, with 13 of the 18 groups achieving very significantly more than the national average for that group.

3.6 Gifted & Talented: More academically gifted boys and girls are two groups which had previously underperformed. In 2008, the CVA for more able boys and more able girls were the lowest of two of the 18 groups of students whose results are measured; their CVAs were 975 and 980 respectively. In 2010 their CVAs were 1016 and 1004. There has been a major focus on raising the aspirations and attainment of more able students. As a result, the percentage of students gaining at least one A* or A grade has tripled from 14% to 42% in the three years since 2008. In addition, in recognition of its excellent work in that respect, the school has been awarded Gifted & Talented Lead School status.

3.7 Mathematics and English: In 2008, 40% of students gained A*-C grades in English and 45% in mathematics. Both subject areas had suffered staffing instability and department leadership needed improving. Over the 34 months of the Partnership, English and mathematics subject leaders have been given considerable support and mentoring by the Executive Team and leaders from Bishop Bell. Bishop Bell's very successful Head of Mathematics was appointed in the same role at The Causeway and has improved the department significantly. Two English leaders from Bishop Bell have mentored the English subject leaders at The Causeway. As a result, despite the ability profile of the students decreasing significantly, the percentage of students gaining A*-C grades in English and mathematics has risen by 27% (from 40% to 67%) in English and by 17% (from 45% to 62%) in Mathematics.

2 Fischer Family Trust B estimate of examination attainment based on the nature of the student intake.

3 Contextual Value Added.

4 These predict what the school will achieve based on its performance over the previous 3 years.

5 Low ability boys; low ability girls; FSM students; SEN on School Action; SEN School Action Plus and Statemented; and those whose first language is not English (EAL)

6 There are 18 groups which OFSTED consider and which are measured in Government statistics.

4. Quality of Teaching & Learning

4.1 A considerable amount of excellent work has been done at The Causeway over the last three years to improve the quality of teaching. One outcome has been the increase in attainment as outlined above. In 2008, half the lessons taught at The Causeway were only satisfactory with one in ten being inadequate. When last measured from January to July 2011, no lessons were inadequate and 95% were judged good or outstanding. Only 5% of lessons were satisfactory and 31%, nearly one in every three was outstanding. That represents a complete transformation of the quality of teaching in the school and was achieved by training, coaching and mentoring to improve teachers' pedagogy, with only one teacher leaving as a result of competence issues.

5. Leadership & Management Capacity

5.1 It is difficult to provide an objective measure of progress in school management quality and capacity, though what has been achieved must be a strong indicator. However, the following should be noted:

- The Partnership was set the target of the quality of leadership being judged by parents a strength of the school⁷ by 2011. Only 18 months into the Partnership parents judged it to be so.
- The Causeway had an OFSTED inspection less than a year into Partnership and Leadership and Management was judged as follows:
 - 89% of parents surveyed by OFSTED said the school was "Led and managed effectively."
 - OFSTED rated Leadership & Management and capacity for sustained improvement 'Good'.
 - OFSTED said, "*Good management systems are in place to maintain high levels of accountability for driving and maintaining improvement... Because of these systems and the ethos established, the improvements made so far have already had some significant impact. Improvement strategies have also been designed to be secure so that, very importantly, they give the school a good capacity to improve further.*"

5.2 In addition to the above, staff turnover has dramatically decreased. Previously, around 10-15 staff left each year creating considerable turbulence. At the end of the 2010 academic year, none of the permanent staff left and, at the end of 2011, only one left.

6. Inclusion

6.1 Parental Engagement: Turnout to parent evenings had been low (30%-50%), communication with parents was an issue and OFSTED had identified that parents were not well involved in supporting their children's education. Improvements evident are:

- Attendance at parent evenings is now very good (between 70%-95%).
- 11 months into Partnership the OFSTED parent questionnaire reported:
 - 79% of parents agreed/strongly agreed, "The school informs me about my child's progress."
 - 76% of parents agreed/strongly agreed, "The school helps me to support my child's learning."
- After 18 months of Partnership, parents judged⁸ strengths of the school to be: encouraging and listening to parents; school communication; and explaining to parents how to help their child.

6.2 Popularity of the School: The school's popularity and image rose rapidly, initially based on the reputation of the Executive Team and then on evident changes. First preference applications for places in the three years prior to Partnership had been 83, 94 and 80, less than half the Published Admission Number of 189. For 2010 the number rose to 105 and then to 145 in 2011. In October 2011, The Causeway had its first ever admissions appeal, with parents going to Independent Appeal to gain a place for their child.

6.3 Absence & Persistent Absence: Persistent absence has reduced from 9.9% in 2008 to

⁷ Measured using a national survey company (Kirkland Rowell) where key strengths are identified against national norms.

⁸ Measured using a national survey company (Kirkland Rowell) where key strengths are identified against national norms.

5.9% in 2011 and with attendance has risen from 91.4% to 92.3%.

6.4 Engagement with External Agencies: In October 2009, OFSTED commented, *“The school works very closely with a wide range of partners and this has had significant impact in securing improvements in the quality of the curriculum and in the quality of care, guidance and support... Coordination with a range of care and advice providers such as education welfare services, Connexions and the on-site drop-in centre for older pupils operating in liaison with the local primary health care trust extend opportunities for pupils to access good quality care and advice... The school has a wholehearted commitment to serving the needs of its community. It has a detailed knowledge of the degree of local community cohesion and has taken steps to respond in practical and useful ways.”*

6.5 Student Behaviour and Bullying: OFSTED in 2006 commented on unacceptable student behaviour whilst in 2009 OFSTED said, *“Behaviour around the site is generally good and pupils feel that they have a good level of physical and emotional security. Pupils are welcoming and friendly and often behave thoughtfully towards each other. Bullying is regarded as rare.”* In 2010, control of bullying and school discipline were rated as strengths of the School by parents.⁹ The School Improvement Partner’s National Challenge report in May 2011, commented, *“In every class all students were actively on task, engaging enthusiastically with their work. Pupils seemed happy in all environments.”*

6.6 SEN: As can be seen above, there have been considerable, measureable improvements in the progress of students with SEN.

7. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations

7.1 The Bishop Bell - Causeway Partnership has secured a through year trend of significant improvement in the standards and outcomes of The Causeway School. During this time standards and outcomes at Bishop Bell have continued to improve from good to outstanding.

7.2 Funding for The Bishop Bell - Causeway Partnership from the Local Authority has now ceased. These two schools have maintained a formal partnership for the academic year 2011-2012. Although activity is reduced this will provide a good exit strategy and the opportunity to consider the prospects for partnership in the future.

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Background Documents

None

⁹ Measured using a national survey company (Kirkland Rowell) where key strengths are identified against national norms.