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Conversations with our Headteachers

As Chairs we should be having regular scheduled meetings with our Heads. Those are the meetings where we develop a global picture of the school and become aware of any emerging issues.

General meeting questions

* How are you?
* How are the staff?
* Is there anything I need to know about staff welfare / performance?
* Is there anything I need to know about behaviour / attendance / other pupil issues? NB This is where you may hear about possible exclusions.
* Have there been any safeguarding incidents?
* Are there any issues ongoing that could become complaints?
* What’s taking up a lot of your time this week?

Termly questions

* What is pupil progress looking like? If your school uses NFER or similar tests, ask to see the data from those.
* Any items we need to ensure are on our next FGB/LGB agenda / any concerns from our last meeting?
* If you head shares a new project – how does that fit into our School Development / Improvement Plan?
* Any issues with our building / compliance items? Have any Health and Safety issues been reported? What action was taken?
* Is our budget still looking healthy?
* Are we still sticking to our Pupil Premium plan or has it been amended (things change!)?
* Has the school council met? What issues did they raise?
* Any work we need to do on preparing for OFSTED/ SIAMS?

Deep Dive areas for new Chairs / Monitoring Questions

Vision & Values

* Do we have a clear vision and strategy for the school as per the Governance Handbook?
* Do we have a vision for where we want the school to be in 3-5 years’ time?
* Is our vision ambitious but achievable?
* Does our vision set out what we want our pupils to have left our school having achieved (e.g. in terms of personal development, attainment, progress etc.)?
* Have we considered the views of parents, pupils and staff when developing our vision?
* Do we have a strategy in place to achieve the vision?
* Do we have clear key performance indicators / outcomes against which to measure success?
* When did we last review our ethos / values statement?
* Are the school’s values reflected in our SIP / SDP?
* How do we publicise our Christian values (e.g. are they on our website)?
* How do staff and governors promote the school’s Christian values in their conduct?
* Do pupils know what the school’s Christian values are?
* How do we ensure that pupils leave our school equipped for the next stage of life?
* Does the school curriculum reflect and develop our stated Christian values?
* How do staff embed the school’s Christian values into their teaching?
* How ready are we for Ofsted / SIAMS?

Staffing

* How effectively are staff managed and appraised?
* Do all line managers meet regularly 1:1 with their staff?
* How do you go about setting objectives?
* Do all classroom-based staff (teaching and non-teaching) have performance objectives which relate to the school development priorities?
* What moderation does the SLT undertake in relation to performance management objectives?
* How many staff achieved their objectives for the past year?
* What additional support is being offered to staff struggling to meet objectives and is that working well?
* Have we got an effective pay structure in place?
* When did we last review our pay policy?
* Is it clear how performance and pay are related?
* Are we able to use the pay structure to reward our best staff?
* Is there correlation between appraisal outcomes, pay and the quality of teaching and learning?
* What percentage of teaching is outstanding / good / requires improvement / inadequate?
* Do you have a programme of staff development for succession planning to ensure the school has a good supply of middle and senior leaders?
* What is the staff retention like in reference to similar school?
* What is staff absence / sickness like in reference to similar schools?
* Are you carrying out ‘exit’ interviews for staff who leave? Are there any common themes?
* Are staff surveys being carried out? What is being asked and what has been the response?
* How is staff workload being considered when making decisions?
* Have we got the skills and knowledge in the staff team to manage personnel matters well, and how it this demonstrated?

Continuing professional development

* How much money is being spent on the full variety of CPD activities? Do we need to increase this?
* How much time is allocated for staff to engage in professional learning? Is time allocated for all staff, including non-teaching staff?
* Is this time sufficient, or do we need to plan to extend this?
* What is the programme of CPD activities for the year?
* Is the school building on the expertise and skills of its own staff, and how is the school working with other schools?
* How is the school ensuring that it is engaging with quality providers?
* Is every member of staff (including non-teaching staff) being proactively supported in their career development?
* Are appraisal and mid-year reviews used with all staff to discuss specific development needs and set a personal development objective?

Curriculum

* How well does the curriculum provide for and stretch all pupils?
* How do we ensure our pupils receive a broad and balanced education?
* How do we know that the curriculum meets the particular needs of each of our pupils?
* How do we ensure there is an appropriate balance in terms of subjects?
* How do we ensure pupils gain the skills they need (as well as the knowledge) and develop appropriate attitudes to enable them to flourish in and outside of school?
* How do you ensure that the curriculum across the school promotes the ethos of the school and the pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?
* How could the curriculum be made more exciting / stand out more?
* Have you asked the pupils what they want from the curriculum? And what did they say?
* What do other local schools offer in their curriculum which is different from ours?
* How does the school use partnerships with other schools / businesses / the local community / church to enhance the curriculum?
* How are staff encouraged to be more innovative about the teaching of the curriculum?
* Is there sufficient lesson differentiation to provide for students of all abilities?
* How are you encouraging different key stage staff to collaborate and inter-department collaboration?
* How do you know that our assessment systems are robust and accurately measure pupils’ progress?
* Have all staff received training on how to make best use of our assessment system? Are all teachers using the assessment system consistently and how do you know?
* How are teachers communicating the results of their assessment to pupils and parents?
* What feedback have we had from parents about how well this is done?
* How do you ensure all teaching staff are clear about the National Curriculum requirements?

Standards

* **What are we doing to raise standards for all children?**
* How does attainment at this school compare to national averages?
* What, if any, impact does the context of our school have on pupils’ attainment?
* How is the school performing in English and maths?
* How do children in our school progress compared with expectations?
* How does the school’s performance compare to those for other similar schools?
* Which groups of pupils in terms of gender and ethnicity are the highest and lowest performing?
* How are FSM, SEN and EAL students progressing compared with other students in this school, and compared with FSM students in other schools?
* How are low, middle and high ability children progressing and attaining?
* Which subjects are highest and lowest performing?
* Do we know how these results have been changing over the past three years: are we improving or not?
* How does attendance in each year group compare with national averages, and what are the trends over time?
* Does the headteacher’s report give a clear indication of progress towards meeting the targets / objectives in the school development / improvement plan?
* Does the headteacher’s report give a clear indication of pupil progress for all year groups and subjects in the school?
* What are the strengths and weaknesses of this school?
* Why is progress in some subjects below national expectations?
* What is your strategy for improving the areas of weak performance?
* Why is progress in some subjects or year groups better than others in the school?
* What is being done to raise performance specifically in those areas which are under-achieving?
* What has worked well and can we use it more widely?
* How does this relate to the quality of teaching across the school?
* Are staff aware of which pupils and groups of pupils are underachieving?
* Why are some groups of pupils progressing less well than others in the school?
* What is being done to close this gap?
* How will you demonstrate to the governing body that improvement is taking place?
* Who in the staff group has responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of different interventions and how is this done?
* Which interventions offer the best results and how does this compare with the cost?
* Are we learning from other schools?
* For pupils with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, are we meeting all of the requirements on their EHCP?
* How much progress are pupils with e.g. SEN, EAL, FSM making in relation to:
  + The expected level?
  + The national average?
  + The school average?
  + Equivalent schools?
* What is the attainment for pupils with e.g. SEN, EAL, FSM in our school in comparison to:
  + The expected level?
  + The national average?
  + The school average?
  + Equivalent schools?
* How do we assess our pupils?
* How do we set individual targets for pupils?
* What proportion of pupils are meeting their personal progress targets?
* How do you know the targets are ambitious enough?
* What is being done to help the individual pupils that aren’t meeting their targets?
* What is the impact of that and how do you know?
* How is assessment and feedback used to help children progress and meet their targets?
* What strategies are in place to ensure the most able pupils are stretched?
* How do you know they are working?
* Is low attendance having an impact on pupil outcomes?
* How do we prepare children for the next stage of their education?