

Academy Review Process

Academy name	Dixons Allerton Academy (EY)
Date of review visit	Tuesday 11 October 2016
Lead B11 Consultant	Peter Cox
Peer Headteachers	Justine Oldham

The academy's self-evaluation and outcomes of this review

	Academy self evaluation grade	Review grade
Overall effectiveness	2	2a
Leadership and management	2	2a
Teaching, learning, assessment	2	2a
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	1	1
Outcomes	2	2a
Overall effectiveness of EYFS	2	2a

Key to review fine-grades:

1 =outstanding; 2a = strongly good with outstanding elements; 2b = securely good; 2c = good but not secure; 3a = requires improvement but with good elements; 3b = requires improvement; 3c requires improvement but not secure; 4a = inadequate (SW likely); and 4b = inadequate (SM likely).

Information about this review

- The focus of this review was specifically on the effectiveness of the early years provision. It was carried out using the latest Ofsted guidance. The headteacher of the academy provided the plan for the day, which included meetings on the self-evaluation form, data and leadership and management, including that of teaching and learning. There were first hand observations of learning taking place in the Nursery and Reception both indoors and outdoors.
- During and at the end of the review discussions took place between the reviewers and senior members of staff as to the findings of the review and the ways forward.

Discussions were focused on helping the academy prepare for any possible forthcoming inspection. Much of the detail on what to improve was given verbally in these discussions.

Risks identified by the academy

- There were no risks identified by the academy for this review but the review team focused on the 'next steps' as identified in the SEF under early years to determine whether or not the academy was making headway. The next steps identified are:
 1. Ensure that more children achieve the Early Learning Goal for reading and writing in order to support the academy's Good Level of Development (GLD) being in line with national figures.
 2. Ensure that there is no gap in the achievement of boys and girls in this year's Reception cohort.
 3. Ensure that those children leaving Nursery 'above age typical' and who are capable of achieving an 'exceeding' judgement in reading, writing and number, do so.

Leadership and Management

- The academy opened three years ago and until only recently the leadership and management team was the headteacher because of the small number of pupils on role. The headteacher's background is in early years and this experience and expertise shows through in the vision for the academy as a whole and the early years setting in particular.
- The intake into the setting has changed since the academy opened three years ago. The majority of children are from the immediate community and represent an increasing proportion of children coming from a disadvantaged family; the deprivation index has also changed. There are currently 48 children in Nursery and 60 in Reception.
- The setting provides high quality provision for the children both internally and externally. Routines for staff and children are well established and wholly centred around the children. There is no hiding place for complacency as the journey towards outstanding continues.
- The leadership team have action plans to address any shortcomings and evaluate the progress against these with rigour. The expectation is that actions are rapidly secured and not left to linger unresolved.
- Baseline assessment data, specifically in literacy and mathematics was looked at closely to determine its accuracy. The early years lead was not always fully confident in her responses around progress from Nursery into Reception and specifically about why the mathematics reception baseline data is so low. However, the headteacher is able to clearly articulate baseline and progress data and acknowledges the need for a very thorough collection of evidence to support this.
- Safeguarding is robust and meets requirements. The single central record was not scrutinised on this visit. However, systems and processes to safeguard children were thoroughly discussed. Case studies provided good evidence of leaders' and managers' knowledge of vulnerable children and their families and the correct actions taken, when required, to help keep children safe.

- Links with parents are strong. Responses to Nursery and Reception questionnaires, when special events and workshops take place, are very complimentary. For example a workshop entitled 'How your children learn to count and use numbers' was attended by over 80% of parents all of whom strongly agreed or agreed that it was purposeful. Comments left by parents were positive too. 'I think you are doing a brilliant job. The ideas that you use are really good and helpful at home' and 'This workshop has really helped me to teach my child',
- At lunchtime parents were invited to eat with their children. Here they could see the way their children mixed socially and the high expectations set by the academy for all to sit down to eat together in a well-ordered manner. Those parents spoken to said they appreciated very much the 'extra mile' the school goes to in order to prepare their children for later life, teaching them social responsibility and the benefits of caring and supporting one another.
- The early years leader, together with the headteacher and deputy head teacher, have analysed all data from 2015/16 and have a clear plan to ensure the three year dipping trend in literacy and mathematics GLD overall is reversed.
- The early years SEF is accurate and has identified the correct areas to improve. The leaders and managers agreed the areas for improvement with the review team and began to make plans before the end of the day, a sign of the quality of leadership that understands what to do get to a grade of outstanding. When the areas for development are addressed and providing there is no let up in the gains in learning and development the children make in early years, it is very likely the highest judgement will be achieved.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- Throughout the setting teachers and other adults expectations were very clear and they all were actively engaging with their children either in small groups or individually. Plenty of opportunity was allowed for children to develop their own learning and social interaction with others.
- Out in the fresh air on a wet and windy day children were happily enjoying themselves making mud pies and mark making on the ground with coloured chalk. The ratio of adults to children was good and adults were always keen to get involved in the children's activities without stifling independence and exploration of learning.
- Learning activities provide many opportunities for the development of children's thinking skills and positively encourage social interactions such as turn taking.
- Staff have a good secure knowledge of how to support children's individual learning needs. Staff repeat letter sounds clearly to improve children's developing language and communication skills although there were some areas to improve around blending and partitioning letters and sounds.
- During the review children were seen to be happy, confident and creative in lessons. They participate well in the innovative and creative curriculum that is designed to develop the whole child.
- Teachers have a good understanding of the differences between groups of pupils and are going about diminishing these differences in the right way.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

- Early Excellence Baseline Data demonstrates that the provision supports children in feeling safe, secure and able to learn. Children develop their independence and sense of purpose through outdoor activities and making healthy food choices at family dining.
- The setting has a welcoming environment. Staff have a very caring approach and a well-established key-person system helps children form secure attachments and supports their well-being and skills for the future. For example, at lunch times as mentioned above, staff encourage children to be physically active and develop their awareness of healthy lifestyles. Leaders and staff actively support diversity by allowing children to explore different religious festivals through planned activities in the curriculum.

Outcomes for children

- The vast majority of the children entering the setting in Nursery are working within the 22-36 month range which is 'developing or below' with significant weaknesses in most areas of learning. At the beginning of Reception in 2015/16 no children were on track to achieve GLD. However by the end of the year 62% had made significant gains in GLD.
- Almost all children have made accelerated progress, especially in the Prime Areas of Learning.
- Disadvantaged children develop well when compared to others in the setting. All disadvantaged children made accelerated progress.
- The data highlights a significant gap between girls and boys achieving GLD. It is fair to say that the percentage of boys who have SEND is proportionally higher than that of girls. When a data exercise is undertaken and these boys are removed, boys achieved in line with national figures for GLD.

Areas of strength for academy to academy support

- As in other parts of the key stage 2 provision seen recently, the early years setting is a strength. Curriculum mapping and the non-negotiable expectations of teachers are examples of good practice and would benefit from being shared across the trust and beyond.

Things the academy should think about

- Gather more evidence to support the base lining of children. Given the staggered start of children into the setting this offers more opportunities to assess children.
- Accelerate whole class phonics teaching and sharpen its assessment so that children can get on track more quickly.
- Ensure handwriting is practised not just on the carpet but at desks and tables and that a more substantial white board is used to help secure accuracy of children's handwriting.
- Risk assess the internal gate leading from the external learning area of the provision to other areas of the academy.

Areas requiring support

- Nothing other than those mentioned above, which the academy is aware of and which, by the end of the review, leaders were beginning to action. The collegiate approach across academies within the trust will doubtless support these improvements.