

Dalkeith High School Learning Visits: May 2017

Introduction

In session 2016-17, it was agreed that the focus of the Learning Visits involving all teachers would be on the **visible learner** strand of **Visible Learning**. This reflects our continuing development of learning and teaching strategies in keeping with the **Visible Learning** model. As part of their continuous in-service training, all staff were introduced to the four **Learner Qualities** we would be embedding at Dalkeith High School. It was agreed that we would focus on developing learners who are:

- **Responsible**
- **Resourceful**
- **Resilient**
- **Reflective**

Therefore, the Learning Visits undertaken both in the October round and in May considered the ways in which the promotion of these **learner qualities** was being embedded in classroom practice.

Staff had three weeks in which to complete their visits and majority worked in the same pairs/ trios as they had in October. Most pairs/trios were from different subjects/ faculties to extend the understanding of learning and teaching across the whole school.

Composition of Learning Visits

51 Learning Visits were evidenced. The subjects represented were: Art and Design, ASDAN, Business Education, CDT, Drama, English, French, Geography, Graphic Communication, History, Home Economics, Maths, Modern Studies, Music, PE, PSE, RME, Science, Spanish, Support for Learning

Given the time of year, all visits were to classes in the Broad General Education, with exception of one senior study class. This was advantageous given the focus we will have next session on further supporting pace, challenging and differentiation in the BGE.

Gathering Evidence

All staff taking part in Learning Visits were supplied with the same Learning Visit Reflection pro-forma (see *Appendix A*), which reflects some of the Quality Indicators in *How Good Is Our School? (4)* The Learning Visit Reflection Form also highlighted the focus on the **visible learner** via the four **Learner Qualities**.

All visitors structured their comments with reference to the **HGIOS Quality Indicators** below:

- Learning, teaching and assessment: quality of teaching; effective use of assessment (2.3)
- Curriculum: skills for learning, life and work (2.2)
- Personalised support: targeted support; removal of barriers to learning (2.4)

Further to this, they were encouraged to make a note of:

- Key discussion points following the lesson
- Aims for future visits (staff should be able to identify their own next steps)
- Good practice observed that could be shared more widely

Key observations: Learning, teaching and assessment (2.3)

It was clear from the evidence provided that staff were moving towards embedding Learner Qualities. Every Reflection Form made explicit reference to the responsible, resourceful, resilient and reflective learning in evidence and/ or the next steps in developing the Learner Qualities. Such was the volume of reflective comments it is not possible to include them all in full. However, the observations below provide examples of highly effective learning and teaching in the full range of subject contexts.

Art and Design: The clear use of learning intentions and success criteria resulted in strong reflective discussion; techniques were clearly demonstrated and learners knew what was expected of them; the use of 'emojis' was a learner friendly way for learners to reflect on work; learners fed back to the class about their strengths and any changes which ensured there were not passive learners

ASDAN: The learner qualities were very clear in both the learning intentions and throughout the lesson; there were success criteria and a reflective plenary at the end of the lesson.

Business Education: There was good use of verbal feedback in paired assessment; there was regular checking of understanding and reinforcement of concepts.

CDT: Those who were reluctant to offer responses were drawn into discussions with humour; the lesson was presented in appropriate stages with each stage being assessed before moving on; success criteria were clearly displayed on the board with links made to prior learning; pupils got to compare their work to that of their peers and the demonstration.

Drama: The positive classroom environment ensured that all learners felt comfortable in discussing their work; the use of open questions encouraged learners to articulate their decisions; the teacher used one to one discussions to check understanding and progress; learners were reminded of previous learning through examples to look back and reflect on.

English: The strong relationships in evidence formed the basis of an effective lesson; the learners were encouraged to be independent and use appropriate stuck strategies; an effective plenary ensured that learners' understanding had been checked; the importance of accuracy in writing across the school as expressed.

French: The use of peer assessment helped to engage the learners; the teacher was continually moving about the room to engage learners; learners had a clear example of good work on the board to support them.

Geography: The teacher was in the role of facilitator rather than leader once the discussion topic had been given; learning was linked to previous learning and to the week's events; the learners had done previous research and taught each other with the class teacher supplementing input.

Graphic Communication: Learners could reflect and be responsible in identifying their next steps in the design process; one to one support and challenge was offered through continuous learner conversations.

History: The use of 'Just a minute' was a great way for learners to re-cap and they were responsible for deciding what information to include; the use of post-it notes meant the teachers could identify prior knowledge; the use of pupil voice was a significant strength; resilience was built with the class teacher asking for responses at random rather than just through 'hands up'; pupils were encouraged to reflect back on their learning and reflective questions to support this were asked throughout.

Home Economics: Learners understood the purpose of the learning and reflected back on the previous lesson; verbal feedback was given throughout the lesson to encourage reflection; learners managed their own resources well; good relationships between staff and pupils helped with effective formative assessment.

Maths: Learners had the option to extend their learning with a more challenging task; explanations were clear with appropriate re-caps; learners commented that their end of week quiz helped to reinforce their learning; the creation of a poster to share learning was an effective assessment method; peer feedback was used in group learning; learners marked their own questions after each section to reflect on how they had done; learners used post-its in the plenary to reflect on what they were more and less confident on

Modern Studies: There was a calm and inclusive ethos which enabled all learners to get involved in the lesson; supplementary questions were asked during group activities to encourage higher order thinking skills.

Music: Learners were clear about how they would be assessed at the end of the project; areas for improvement were identified on an ongoing basis.

PE: Learners who were working in groups had clear roles to encourage responsibility; the use of technology to watch back activities encouraged reflection; there was a peer led feedback session part way through the lesson; peer assessment was used for learners to provide feedback to each other

PSE: Learners reflected at the end of the lesson on what they would change based on peer feedback; evidence of previous learning was available to support learners in their reflections; time was spent on one to one learner conversations.

RME: Learners were evaluating each other using peer assessment; learners were presented with the same instruction in several different ways to support understanding; clear success criteria statements were given to support learners in their task.

Science: Learners working in groups had assigned roles; assessment and feedback happened throughout the lesson; learners were responsible for doing their own research on i-pads; the use of careful questioning enabled differentiation; both the starter and the plenary allowed learners time to reflect; clear links were made between what as being learned in the classroom and real life.

Spanish: Success criteria were clear; the class were obviously used to and understood their classroom routine.

Support for Learning: Good use was made of records of work with learners responsible for checking their own progress; the traffic light system for learners to reflect on progress was effective; time for reflection was allowed after each question was asked; resilience was built through the repetition of tasks to increase confidence.

Key observations: Skills for learning, life and work (2.2)

The information gathered evidence of staff efficacy in considering a range of skills e.g. those implicit in Developing the Young Workforce; Midlothian employability skills; Bloom's taxonomy; Solo taxonomy and higher order thinking skills (HOTS). Staff also continued to take cognisance of the Learner Qualities we seek to embed.

Art and Design: There was an identification of higher order thinking skills and a focus on why these were so important in learning; explicit reference was made to skills including reflecting, evaluating, developing and creating.

ASDAN: The use of the learner voice was consistent in the lesson; the success criteria were linked to skills for the workplace.

Business Education: Learners engaged in both paired and whole class discussion; learners engaged in team work; the ICT skills the learners were using could be used for future job opportunities; collaborative learning was taking place with groups sharing the information they had gathered.

CDT: Learners were resilient in deciding which of their designs wouldn't work; they were able to be responsible by summarising all of the safety steps associated with the use of equipment; the learners formed a supportive community, consistently giving each other feedback; learners were aware of health and safety issues and how these related to the workplace.

Drama: Learners were able to communicate effectively by describing their script ideas articulately and confidently; learners worked in team to problem solve; they had to employ decision making and negotiating skills.

English: Learners were able to see mistakes as learning opportunities; learners could feedback their learning through both verbal and written means; resilience was in evidence with a learning who kept developing their responses until they were confident they were on the right lines; there was a focus on the accuracy of writing as a transferable skill; the short story being discussed was clearly linked to real life and the implications different choices can have.

French: There was evidence of teamwork and learners being able to identify their own next steps for improvement; activities were timed to help learners manage deadlines; learners were encouraged to be responsible through accessing their own materials; the use of a mind map was something that could be transferred to other subjects

Geography: There was clear teamwork with the learners teaching each other; learners were responsible enough to gather and disseminate information effectively.

Graphic Communication: Learners were using Google Sketch up and resilient when encountering problems; learners supported each other and demonstrated good teamwork.

History: Learners were developing higher order thinking skills through their questioning and their responses to the contributions of others; evaluation skills were linked to other subjects in the school; good literacy skills were demonstrated through talking and listening.

Home Economics: Learners were encouraged to work independently and responsibly; literacy skills were involved as the learners had to advertise their final, healthier products.

Maths: Learners knew that, as well as asking the teacher for help, they could ask a friend, or check their textbooks; skills were clearly linked to good exam practice; learners were using thinking skills through creating, applying, remembering and understanding; the relevance of the lesson was clear with learners given real life examples of where they might apply their learning; there was a 'resilience period' at the start of each lesson where learners had to apply strategies rather than immediately ask for help.

Modern Studies: Learners were working collaboratively and helped each other to ensure tasks were completed within the time set; learners were encouraged to support each other if they got stuck.

Music: Learners were using a variety of ICT and were resilient when they encountered any problems; the mixed ability groups supported teamwork skills.

PE: There was clear demonstration of communication skills through talking and listening; the learners had to lead during the lessons and had specific roles assigned to their group; learners were resilient as they kept trying at activities they struggled with and were reminded of the value of participation; the atmosphere of trust meant that learners were happy to speak out in front of each other

PSE: There were clear links made between the curriculum and its relevance to everyday lives; the award the learners were working towards is recognised by employers.

RME: Learners had to be responsible for managing their time within the lesson; learners managed well with sharing and organising resources; there were explicit references to the skills within Bloom's taxonomy.

Science: Learners applied problem-solving and research skills and were able to use their social skills to plan and carry out practical work safely; peer mentoring was in action in mixed ability groups; learners were encouraged to be resilient and work independently as they would need these skills for further study.

Spanish: Listening and speaking skills were developed throughout; the interactive video lead to learners making 'real life' decisions.

Support for Learning: Responsibility is encouraged through the use of logs and learners organising their own materials; there are lots of visual aids reminding the learners of the skills they are developing

Key observations: Personalised Support (2.4)

Staff continued to employ a wide range of universal and targeted interventions to support the learning of all young people. It was particularly encouraging to note increased references to challenging our more able learners, as this will be a particular focus next session.

- Learning assistants offered **one to one support** where required
- **Instructions** were clear and repeated to ensure they are **accessible**
- Learners **supported each other**
- Challenge was provided through **feedback** as learners were encouraged **to continuously improve**
- Learners had **a choice about the level of challenge** in their activity
- Learners understood that the re-cap questions helped them to **build on prior knowledge**
- A gradual **build up of challenge throughout the lesson** supported differentiation
- **Equity was evident** in the lesson with the class teacher recognising that some learners needed more support than others
- **Mixed ability** groups allowed for **peer support** and ensured that more able were **pushed to reinforce their learning**
- **Use of praise** identified good learning and **encouraged learners** to get involved
- Learners identified their **own area for improvement** to be considered in the next lesson
- Learners were **paired to share information and support** each other
- The teacher's creation of an **inclusive environment** helped to remove barriers to learning
- A **very visual environment** helped to remove barriers to learning
- Learners appreciated the **extra time** give to them in the Base to support their return to classes
- **Support notes** and/ or **help sheets** were made available where required

- **Practical demonstrations** helped learners to visualise what they were to do
- **Effective questioning** helped learners to identify subject specific language and techniques
- **EAL learners** were supported by their peers to ensure good language skills were modeled
- **'Show me' boards** were used to assess understanding without putting pressure on learners
- The use of **ICT such as Smartboards and visualiser** helped to present information in a range of ways
- There were **bronze/silver/ gold questions** to answer to provide challenge and support
- **Staff in the class worked effectively together** to identify where their support was most needed
- **Extension tasks** and/ or **extension questions** were used to develop the skills of the most able
- **Practical experiments** helped to support a real understanding of the theory
- Learners were issued with **differentiated guidelines** to ensure that all could access the task
- **Thinking time** was provided to ensure more in-depth responses
- More able learners could **contribute to discussions independently**; **questions** were used to encourage those who were less confident
- Learners who struggled with written tasks could **focus on the key words** rather than large amounts on writing
- **Verbal feedback and discussions** helped to assess learners' ever changing learning needs
- The use of **success criteria** supported learners in assessing how they could develop their work
- **All learners were expected to contribute** at least one point to the class discussion, with those who were more confident far exceeding this
- Learners had good **visual reminders of the tasks** they had to complete
- Realistic **personal targets** were set to demonstrate **continuous progress**
- **Tasks were fluid** and could be adapted to meet the needs of the learner
- The **Visible Learning approach** was infused and learners were active
- **Good pace** in lessons helps learners to stay focused

Key discussion points between teacher/ visitor

All most all staff reported that their discussions had focused on the four Learner Qualities and their further development. Further to this the following discussion points were made:

- Giving learners the chance to **talk reflectively and informally** leads to self assessment without any pressure
- The focus on **personal progress** is important to ensure a **positive ethos**
- **Working collaboratively** can be a challenge for some learners so **structure is important** for this to be successful e.g. clear instructions, deadlines, well thought out tasks and questions
- **Plenary activities** are important to ensure that learners understand the **skills** they are using and the steps they need to take to progress to their full ability
- Lessons need a **balance** between many different factors e.g. the significant aspects of learning, the Learner Qualities, specific learning intentions and success criteria
- Learners fully appreciate having **ownership of their learning** and chances to be challenged and reflect are crucial
- Learners seem more willing to ensure their conduct is good when they understand the **potential impact on their own learning and that of others**; they benefit from chances to discuss this
- **Relationships** between teachers and pupils **based on trust and respect** are vital for ensuring progress

- It's important to get the balance right between **open ended exploration and teacher intervention**; learners need to be able to **self-regulate** before they have complete creative freedom
- Making good use of **resources** ensures that **learners can support themselves** to progress
- **Personalisation and choice** are very motivating in ensuring progress
- It's interesting to see how learners perform in a **mixed ability class as opposed to a set** class
- The encouragement of **creativity** was evident and learners were encouraged to share thoughts without feeling embarrassed or intimidated
- Learners are encouraged to **contribute their own views** and this build confidence and resilience
- There was discussion around the advantages and disadvantages of **grouping** according to friendship or other means for collaborative learning
- Managing **structure** in writing is important for all subjects and a key skill
- It's easy to overlook **time for reflection** when learners are engaged and want to keep going; but this is crucial in capturing progress
- It's important to avoid 'spoonfeeding' so that learners are responsible and the **pace of learning** is kept up
- A **quick and organised start** to lessons is crucial to ensure that learners are on task throughout
- A **pupil-led learning environment** helps to promote **higher order thinking skills**
- Learners were encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities to further build progress
- **Humour** can be used effectively to diffuse **potentially challenging** situations
- **Dealing with issues as the 'lowest level'** keeps the focus on learning e.g. quickly providing a pencil, getting a pupil who is late on task straight away and discussing later
- Learners enjoy the challenge of a **fast pace** when they feel well prepared
- Activities which are kept **flexible** help to meet the needs of all learners
- Learners weren't immediately given an answer to their question; they were encouraged to go back and **check their previous learning** where appropriate
- **Skillful questioning** meant that lower ability learners were included
- **Research** skills are required for a range of subjects
- Learners can actually reference the 4 Rs when thinking about **'soft skills' for future employment**

Outcomes/aims

A number of these were specific to classroom context, though most could be applied across a number of curriculum areas. It was also interesting to note that, for the first time, some aims were shared by a significant number of staff.

Outcomes/ aims identified by 2 or 3 members of staff are labeled (*)

Outcomes/ aims identified by more than 3 members of staff are labeled (**)

- To ensure more **explicit references to learner qualities** throughout lessons (**)
- To give **more responsibility to learners** in class to support their development
- To examine **how well learners have retained information** on a more regular basis
- To continue to **encourage learners to work collaboratively** (**)
- To build in **specific points for reflection** in lesson (**)
- To share **subject specific vocabulary** across departments to promote shared language
- To continue to explore more **varied methods of assessment**

- To ensure **further differentiation** in Broad General Education classes (*)
- To target **resilience** and its importance to the learner (**)
- To continue to develop more **pupil lead learning**
- To make **explicit references to skills** (*)
- To focus on **strong starts** to ensure lessons are settled quickly

Notes of good practice

The features identified below have been highlighted as they provide very specific examples of effective learning and teaching that could transfer effectively to other contexts.

- Clear **classroom routines** that can be followed without prompting
- **Verbal feedback** through the tasks to build learners' confidence
- A balance between a **friendly environment and clear rules** to ensure all learners are working well
- **Peer assessment** was conducted within clear parameters
- Learners took care of their own workspaces and were able to identify and collect materials **independently**
- The **use of a visualiser** enabled the sharing of examples with the class
- Post-its notes were used as **exit passes in the plenary**
- **Breaking the lesson down into blocks** of different activities helped to maintain pace and challenge
- The **encouragement of resilience** fostered a positive attitude and supported learners in challenging themselves
- The encouragement of **pupil voice** was a real strength
- The **involvement of all learners** through questioning

Next steps

Learning Visits are now embedded within the school and will continue to be key to sharing good practice in learning and teaching and to self evaluation in this area. Following on from the recommendations arising from the Validated Self-Evaluation in May, the focus of next year's visits will be on **pace and challenge within the BGE**.

All staff will be issued with a self-evaluation form at the start of next session. This will ask them to rate themselves in areas of learning and teaching such as collaborative learning, feedback, and differentiation. The DHT Learning and Teaching will then use this information to create learning trios for session 2017-18 on the basis of sharing the expertise that exists in the school in the most effective way.

Where required, protected time will be available to facilitate developed professional dialogue within the trios after visit have take place.

Quality Indicator 2.4: Personalised Support

Key discussion points between teacher/ visitor: (Please ensure that these discussions take place as soon as possible after the Learning Visit.)

Outcome/aim for future learning visits:

Note of good practice if applicable (to be shared)

Next Learning Visit: May 2017

