

Governor Visit

Health and Wellbeing – Autumn Term 2018

Name of Governors: Gemma Bray, Gill Finch

Date: 4th October 2018

Summary and focus of the visit

The focus of the visit was to discuss the support and provision that is currently used to support pupils with vision impairments in school. We informed Kate Thompson (Vision Impairment Specialist Teacher) of the areas we were interested in:

- The flexible teaching arrangements in place
- Access to specialist learning resources and support
- Local authority provision for pupils
- Adaptations to the physical environment of the school
- Adaptations to school policies and procedures
- Aspirations to improve provision

Kate Thompson provided us with an update paper to inform of the current arrangements in place within school to support pupils.

We have attached the paper we received from Kate Thompson alongside this report. The report summarises the meeting and makes reference to the paper.

The visit focussed on how the school is able to deliver specialist teaching arrangements and the provision of specialist resources available for pupils and staff. There were also discussions about adaptations that have taken place around the school environment. We discussed the services that are offered by the Local Authority. Finally, much of our discussion was about aspiration to improve provision for pupils.

What we have learned from our visit:

There are currently 11 pupils attending Cleaswell Hill School with a diagnosed visual impairment (VI). The school has recognised the need for specialist training to be delivered to staff in order to improve provision for pupils in order to access specialist support and equipment. Kate Thompson has completed one year of a MQTVI (Mandatory Qualification for Teacher of Visually Impaired Pupils) at Birmingham University and is due to complete this specialist qualification in September 2019.

Three Teaching Assistants have completed a course administered by the RNIB (credited at BTEC Advanced Level 3), ten members of staff have been trained to support a pupil and guide dog in school and thirteen members of staff have completed an online training course in vision impairment (certified by the National Sensory Impairment Partnership – NatSIP).

Main Discussions

Local Authority Support

Brendan Dowling (Qualified Teacher for pupils with Vision Impairment) has the role for the County to support pupils across schools. Brendan has trained one Teaching Assistant Braille and is currently working with two more so that Braille can be taught to pupils in school. One child is being taught Braille once per week from a TA and once every two weeks by the QTVI.

Joyce Allinson (LA Habilitation Specialist) is currently working with two pupils to improve their independence in moving around the environment. She visits once per week. This includes long cane, hoople training and independent travel. She also works with the pupils outside of school to improve their independence in the community.

Whole School Staff Training Event

The school is continuing to develop training for staff that work to support pupils. A full staff training session was held during the summer term and the feedback from staff was extremely positive.

VI Life Skills Group

One member of support staff has taken a lead in running a Life Skills Group specifically for pupils with a vision impairment, focussing on key life skills using specialist equipment such as talking scales and induction hobs.

Equipment

Equipment is available in school to support pupils in their lessons. These include magnifying tablets, ipads, audio labellers and a CCTV table top magnifier. There is also a range of equipment to support independent living lessons such as high contrast cooking utensils and talking scales.

Techniques

Depending upon the pupils needs, various techniques are used to support pupils. Work is enlarged to a font size that is recommended by the QTVI and in relation to the pupil's functional visual assessment. The classroom environment is adapted to meet the needs, including declutter of surfaces and classroom displays kept to a minimum to remove distractions. Consideration is given to where the pupil is positioned within the classroom environment. Assistance is given to pupils as they move around school to inform them of where they are.

Aspirations for the future/Actions to be taken

There are some changes that need to be made to the school environment to improve provision.

Changes to the physical school environment/Resources

- New stair carpets and stair edging with a high contrast colour. Currently high visibility tape has been used. Due to the traffic on the stairs this constantly needs replacing, therefore a permanent alternative is needed.
- Edges of ramps, kerbs and steps outside need to be highlighted.
- To roll out tactile signs for doors. Currently some are used on the ICT and Art rooms.
- Begin to use Braille on signs around school.
- A system of 'objects of reference' used throughout school.
- Residential trip for pupils to develop independence.
- Pen friend resources used to increase independence.
- Pupils to visit the low vision aids clinic at the RVI for an assessment.
- RNIB Bookshare and library to be used by teachers for the pupils.

Training

- Training for parents of VI pupils, peers and staff. This could be delivered by a Habilitation Specialist from Northumberland Sensory Support.
- Sighted guide and Independent living skills training.
- Training on the Human Ware Prodigy Connect magnifying tablets.
- Training on how to make practical lessons such as PE and Science more accessible to VI pupils.

Any other comments/ideas for future visits

We would like to thank Kate Thompson for the preparation prior to the meeting and for the information she provided during the visit. It was an extremely informative and positive visit. It provided us with in depth details to what is currently being done to support pupils and high aspirations for the future. We would be keen to conduct further visits to monitor progress and ongoing developments in this specialist area.