

**M.**

The  
McAuley  
Catholic High School  
and Sixth Form  
DONCASTER

A blue truck is driving away on a paved road, carrying a large stack of hay bales. The sky is filled with falling confetti, suggesting a celebratory event. The scene is set outdoors with trees and a cloudy sky.

# Balance

Review of the Year  
August 2022 i79

# M. August i79

The whole business of working in a school today is a **balancing** act.

Firstly, the importance of the decisions that we are asked to take can, let's face it, make a lasting difference to the life chances of the children we teach. As such, education, whilst needing the support of parents and carers, can never be a popularity contest.

Take OFSTED for example. We fully expected a visit last school year. We were ready (and still will be) to explain to them what are doing, the progress that we continue to make. In a nutshell (and this being my annual review of the year) a summary of why we are a GOOD school is as follows.

## **The Quality of Education IMPLEMENTATION**

1. Three year KS3 and the rigorous monitoring of the curriculum at all key stages through the Golden Thread process. S48 judgement was an important external verification of the security of our own judgement. This also included evidence of low stakes and stepped assessments to ensure gaps were filled. Therefore, students study the full curriculum and the curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced to prepare students for future learning/employment.

2. We provide a broader curriculum offer through options. More students studying MFL and choices which engage all students (in terms of ability and characteristics eg PP, SEND)

3. Reading and literacy development is given priority with a focus on a) reading for comprehension b) closing the vocabulary gap work and c) strategies to develop academic talk/oracy. Practice is more effective for SEND, PP and EAL students. Literacy intervention has been strengthened so that students make swift progress with reading

4. Strong collaborative professional learning approach has been led by Curriculum Leaders to develop subject knowledge and subject pedagogy with a literacy focus. ECT provision is good and has been externally verified as such.

5. Assessment is used well to check understanding, identify gaps and to adapt

curriculum and teaching to promote progress – curriculum plans in subjects and evidence from lesson visits (student work and student voice) shows this. This enables more effective intervention and tutoring.

## **The Quality of Education – Standards**

1. 4 year positive trend in Progress 8.
2. No gaps between SEN and non-SEN, Gender gap narrowed, PP and non-pp narrowed.
3. Age related expectations – universally accepted as positive
4. The use of evidence led and data driven conversation informing all leaders at all levels and empowering accurate and timely interventions, for example, the Golden Thread and English Language and Literature in Y11 – power Bi.
5. The regularity of data collection with ATCL gives evidence of improving active participation of students in their learning. Our work with CLs in 'The Golden Thread' visits clearly shows impact of the implementation of the Curriculum. S48 visits to RE endorsed our own findings too

## **Personal Development and Well-being**

1. **Life, Character and Culture Curriculum** – based upon National Guidance and with reference to the PSHE Association. This is further supported by the McAuley Diploma and the Youth Leadership and Active Citizenship Groups. Careers education is comprehensive. We do not have any NEETs (all students move on to the next phase of their education and/or training).
2. **Relationships and Sex Education** meets statutory guidelines and is delivered through the RE curriculum time.
3. **Respecting difference.** The RE curriculum has been adapted to reflect this.
4. **Respect for protected characteristics.** These are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. We pay particular attention to the needs of our staff and students. In our school, we do not judge, nor do we promote a particular lifestyle but offer God's love, tolerance and understanding.
5. **Engagement with partner primaries.** We are full in next Y7.

## **Attendance and Behaviour**

1. Attendance – at or above national and local and has been since March 2020.

2. There is a safeguarding culture in the school including regular staff and Governor training.
3. Massive reduction in external alternative provision. 2018 17 students, 2019, 12, students 2022 4 students.
4. Significant expansion in internal provision for inclusion. ENGAGE, EMMAUS, NURTURE, SEND. Impact on positive attendance and achievement
5. Reduction in FTEs for all key groups.

### **Sixth Form Provision**

1. Ambitious and broad curriculum at KS5 including development of Level 2 to a Level 2/3 hybrid and enhanced enrichment provision e.g. British Sign language, First Aid, 'Maths4Real' Numeracy, Work Experience. The 7 year pledge!
2. Strong outcomes – Ave grade B+, positive progress measures eg L3VA (Level 3 Value Added), excellent achievement of PP students.
3. Strong destinations - No known NEETS. Diverse range of future destinations. Effective Advice and Guidance.
4. Strong recruitment and retention rates despite a very competitive market. 62% from last Y11.
5. Personal Development and Well-being – students are excellent role models and make an active contribution to the wider school eg buddies, classroom volunteers, club leaders etc

### **Strategic communication**

1. Increase in stakeholder engagement – expansion into not only Facebook but Instagram, Twitter and Youtube. monthly reach 15000, Parents Forum. Parents evenings.
2. Staff voice and well-being a clear priority based upon staff voice and research
3. Rewards system
4. Extracurricular uptake
5. Student voice – sexual harassment and bullying, Call it out!, Youth Leadership and Active Citizenship, The McAuley Diploma.

### **Leadership and Management**

1. We have made progress on all areas for improvement highlighted since the last full OFSTED, February 2020. This has been endorsed by one remote monitoring visit (March 21). A Section 8 monitoring visit (June 21), School Improvement Adviser's visit (Feb 22) and Section 48 (May 22).

2. We have a Staff First policy. Staff well-being, welfare and workload are taken very seriously by our team. As such we have no problem recruiting to any posts and staff turnover is minimal.
3. We are super ambitious for every child in the school regardless of starting points. Our '7-year pledge' is our key phrase and in practical terms this is reflected in a new KS3 curriculum and continued expanded of provision at KS5. There is an even greater emphasis in our implementation of the curriculum including reading and literacy with a particular focus on the most vulnerable – PP, SEND with a culture of safeguarding.
4. Two areas rated GOOD in February 2020, Sixth form provision and Personal development and well-being, are actually even better now. See below for details.
5. Leadership and management at all levels is solidly good. At Senior Leadership level we support each other. We are a close-knit team with a shared focus on removing obstacles for every member of our community to be great. We are blessed to have the overwhelming support of staff. Reference to collaborative approaches and ECT provision too.

The **balance** is between measuring ourselves against external measures and being true to our mission as a Catholic school.

We celebrated 40 (yes, I know 41) years as a new entity separate from St Peter's or Catherine McAuley but still building upon that rich heritage. We were really pleased by the outcome of the Section 48 inspection of the Catholic life of the school which confirmed our own view that we are a GOOD school with many outstanding features.

A rich part of the overall experience that students have is underlined by the extra-curricular opportunities that the school offer. We saw a return to concerts and shows, sporting events, sponsored walk and the return of the Lourdes pilgrimage and the Anglesey and Duke of Edinburgh expeditions. After a gap of three years we celebrated the endeavour and achievement of many talented and hardworking students in our Rewards and Recognition evening. Embracing student voice has been a growing theme over the last few years. This

isn't just giving them a way to express their opinion (student council) but to get them involved in being the change that they want to see. So this year we put more emphasis on Youth Leadership and Active citizenship and the McAuley Diploma. The Care for Creation Group have been particularly active (not only planting trees) but establishing an upcycling initiative where parents/carers can access uniform and kit.

I mentioned earlier that we are not here to be a popularity contest. The balance is in being honest with parents about our expectations and asking for support but also pushing back when that support is not in the best interests of their child. It's been said many times but it's pretty accurate. We all went to school. All schools are different but because we all went to a school we have an opinion on what constitutes a good school, a poor school or how we can improve education. The **balance** for parents can be a hard one to strike.

The pressures that we have faced again this year have demanded that we try to **balance** keeping the school open at all costs, keeping our families safe and providing quality emergency remote learning. Between having meaningful assemblies and maximising lesson time. Between understanding the pressure on family finances and maintaining standards in school uniform. Between understanding the impact of the disruption of the last 30 months on the behaviour of some students but also establishing a strong routine as possible for all. Between being inclusive and tolerant but permanently excluding those who choose the wrong path despite being given full support. Between fully staffed and maintaining a full range of subjects and balancing a school budget. Between keeping a focus on staff workload, work life and well-being and keeping an unrelenting drive to further improve. Between judging what is in the best interests of the school in the long term be it as a stand-alone academy or part of a bigger Catholic Multi-academy trust.

We firmly believe that we have struck the right **balance** to ensure that each child, young person, young adult gets the very best that Catholic state education can offer. Indeed, whilst I was writing this

piece, our A Level and GCSE results came in. They are excellent and underline the progress that children and young people make at McAuley. Well done to our Sixth formers who adapted brilliantly to the significant challenges faced over the last two years to produce some stunning A level results. There are always lots of individual success stories; students who gained incredible results whilst coping with and being supported to overcome massive stress and anxiety. Many celebrated the highest grades, a third of whom secured A\* or A. The vast majority progressed onto their preferred pathways including university applicants who have taken places in prestigious Russell Group institutions and on competitive courses such as medicine, Law and Veterinary Science. We are really pleased that others can now look forward to beginning a variety of highly sought after apprenticeships and training programs.

We had the privilege of seeing our Y11 boys and girls achieve the best results in the last five years. We shared their joy.

We are really looking forward to welcoming the vast majority to our new Sixth Form Graduate Centre.

In the most uncertain of times, some things remain true, particularly this year. Never one day is the same when we have the rare privilege of spending time with young people.

Parents and carers also entrust their precious children to us and look to us to guide them onto the next stage of their education.

In practice, be assured, that we will continue to strike a balance between the academic, the social, the physical and the spiritual so that every young person can become the very best version of themselves that they can be.

God Bless  
JohnR