

Targetted Learning Model Parent Forum

Thursday 29th April 2021

Staff Present

Deborah Howard- Headteacher (DH)

Richard Farrow- Assistant Headteacher (Years 1-4) (RF)

Ellie Linton- Communications & Marketing Manager (EL)

Minutes

1. Staff introduced themselves and DH explained that she would be starting the forum by explaining the rationale and background of the model (as outlined in the parent letter that had already been sent out) and how it fits in with the rest of the curriculum.
2. DH mentioned that ahead of the meeting we'd had three emails from parents asking questions about the model- all three would be addressed during the forum.
3. The focus of the model is the academic side of things and it was emphasised that we would still be keeping the rest of the curriculum in place, as well as a lot of additional PSHE. The Targetted Learning Model was the academic response- the wider school response to the pandemic continued. The curriculum staying in place continues to be varied and includes all of the carousel subjects (music, art and outdoor PE), which our governing body continue to support funding for specialist teachers to deliver.
4. The model would also run alongside the effective pastoral response we already have in place as part of our recovery curriculum. This has seen investment in play therapy, counsellors etc. We have also invested in staff training such as one of our team members becoming a Mental Health First Aider, and whole staff training delivered by our Play Therapist. The pastoral team has also introduced morning pastoral check-ins and regular questionnaires with both staff and children.
5. Teaching staff are encouraged to take their class out for extra play time whenever appropriate and there is a free slot in the playground and we have invested in wet play equipment for the different bubbles for use when the weather does not allow for this.
6. DH emphasised that the above is all separate to what is being discussed in the forum today, which will have more of an academic catch-up focus.
7. DH went through the rationale behind the model, and explained as a background that children are currently assessed as being at one of four levels for each subject: greater depth; expected; working towards; and well below. As a school we have always had gaps/variation within children in a single class, however the loss of so much face-to-face teaching this year due to the pandemic has made these gaps more prominent. These gaps have increased in lots of different ways throughout the

pandemic, with a huge variation in what was done at home during lockdown across our families alongside children accessing school and others not. In addition to this, children in younger year groups have missed some of the mechanics of being taught to read and missed basic skills across.

8. Up until now we have had a traditional approach using interventions etc, but we have found that this is not having enough impact on closing gaps and it is not addressing enough children. We needed to find a solution that would support closing the gaps of all children.
9. As a background, Oswald Road received £48k of catch-up funding, which does not go as far as you'd expect in a school of our size.
10. We considered a lot of approaches and consulted a lot of different professionals. The targetted learning model is what has come about as a result of these consultations and the plan is to trial it up until the summer holidays.
11. We were very aware that we did not want to stream in the traditional way (ie. have a 'high', 'medium' and 'low' group in each yeargroup. The model will run as two groups working at expected or greater depth, and one group working on basic skills, key objective coverage and really targetted specific missed learning. This approach allows all children to get a targetted approach for their needs.
12. For the group that will have the specific gaps, the teacher will know these children and specifically what is needed to support catch up and we have confidence that this means that these children can make very rapid progress. There will be a similar approach with the other two groups within the yeargroup. We believe that this will give us a robust response to the missed learning that has come about through the school closures due to the pandemic.
13. DH then went through the specific questions that had been emailed in by parents in advance of the forum. Some parents also asked questions during the forum at this point, and these were answered accordingly.

How will the groups get decided?

Internal assessments and standardised scores are used, however DH and RF have also gone through child-by-child to ensure that each child has been put into the correct group. This way we are not just relying on data, we are making a decision using knowledge of each child specifically.

Will there be different groups for maths and English?

No, these subjects won't be separate. DH and RF worked out groupings on an individual basis child-by-child to ensure that the needs across both of these subjects matched the group they'd been put in. We have found that this has worked well as there are no children who are working at very different levels for English and maths.

When will this be communicated with the children?

We have put together a timeline for the implementation of the model. The full launch for the children will then take place on 21st May however they will be told they are working more as a year group before this point. The pastoral team have worked on a plan for how the teachers will speak to the children about this. Our message to the children will be that we are focussing more on working as a yeargroup, as they will have become used to through the home learning during the last lockdown.

What will the impact be Covid-wise on bubble closures?

We are still working as yeargroup bubbles, so this will not be impacted, however if we do get into a position where we are able to start operating in class bubbles then this is where the impact will be felt, as the groupings will mean that each child will have more contacts than just the other 29 children in their class. We will address this issue as needed as guidance changes.

Who decides what the needs of each child are?

The class teacher and the Phase Lead (Richard Farrow).

What does 'pitch' mean?

The level that the lesson is pitched at.

Will this model not cause disruption to the children?

We will be taking lots of pupil voice as part of the trial of the model up until the summer holidays. We find this a useful tool as we find that our children are very honest when we ask for their feedback on something. We will ensure that we get this pupil voice from children across different ages and groups. We had considered a full day change, rather than just having the groups together in the morning, however we felt that this would have too big a disruptive impact on the children. We're also aware that children are now used to working across their yeargroups now more than ever due to the way the home learning (and skeleton school) was delivered during the more recent school closure. Finally, our pastoral team will be on hand to check in with the children on how they're adjusting to the model.

How is this model different to what is already being done in school?

The model is much the same in many ways as the approach we currently use, just on a much bigger scale. For example, at the moment DH teaches a group of 10 Year 4 children on a daily basis outside of their classroom. DH will use the teacher's planning as a guide but will

pitch the lesson at exactly the right level for those 10 children. The focus is always on progress rather than attainment, which we have seen really allows the children to feel like they can thrive and really proud of their work. We have seen that this model works, however it needs to be led by experienced teachers. At the moment many of these interventions are run by TAs, whereas the targeted learning model will use this approach but will mean that all children are taught at the right level by a teacher in the classrooms. The difference between that and how things are now is that it means that some children will be with a different teacher and in a different classroom in the morning. At this point RF pointed out that Year 3 are already used to doing this, so it will be less of a change for these children. It was also noted that Oswald Road's TAs are very skilled and played a significant part in ensuring staffing per Targetted Model was right. It is right though that all children have a teacher as their primary educator whilst in school.

Will the groups still be class-sized (eg. 30 children per group?)

Yes, we'll be sticking to fair numbers across the three groups in each year group, which means there will be roughly 30 per group. Due to funding there will also be some additional teaching on top of this (eg. DH's teaching group will be able to continue as normal). It is likely the group with more basic skills needs will be slightly smaller.

How is this approach different to regular streaming? I am concerned as evidence on streaming shows that this can be damaging on the children in the lower sets. How will these issues be addressed if the children do see it as streaming? Will there be self-esteem issues? Evidence suggests that struggling children do better in mixed ability groups.

The difference between the model and traditional streaming is that we're not looking at 'high', 'medium' and 'low' groups. As an example, in DH's writing group in Year 4 she has not seen any negative impact on the children whatsoever- the approach we are using is about adoring the children and making them feel like the work they are doing and the progress they are making is the best thing ever. There is no mention of attainment to the children, only a focus on progress. In secondary schools there can often be self-esteem issues in lower sets due to behaviour issues that come with this set-up, which is not of a concern at our school, and also the fact that the lower sets in the past have sometimes been assigned weaker teachers. With our model this is not the case. In addition, we feel that we are not going to be able to deliver the targeted learning that all of our children need if we don't do it this way. Streaming can work very well if communication between school and home is at a high level and so we have put plans in place so that teachers and parents can communicate really well together. Children that need gaps addressing will have stronger links between home and school, with fortnightly back and forth between the teacher and the parents. We understand that parents may have reservations about streaming, however we need to ensure that we are giving our children the very best teaching- they only get one chance at primary school and we have to do what we can while they're with us, particularly given the amount of learning missed in the last year. We just can't allow our children to leave our

school with gaps in their learning that could have been addressed. RF added that we are mitigating against the risks that often come with streaming in secondary schools (eg. behaviour, lower teaching quality) and we are actively focussing on looking after our children's self-esteem.

What is your exit strategy, is there a timeline?

The plan is to trial up until the summer holidays and in this time gather parent, staff and pupil voice. During this trial we want real, honest feedback from all involved. A decision will then be made in conjunction with the specialists that we have already consulted with as to whether we continue next academic year.

I have concerns about the amount of missed school. The first barrier is getting the children into school and I would like to see things in place that allow children to fall in love with school again (eg. extra-curricular activities, having a nice time with teachers and friends). My concern is that this model might set children back and make them not want to come back to school after the summer holidays. Could the model not be started next academic year instead? For me the disruption and the focus on the word 'catch-up' seem to be the biggest issue. Also, my child says they're not doing things they used to like topic and ICT.

DH agreed that the word 'catch-up' was not a helpful phrase, and it is only used so much when talking about this model due to the fact that the funding provided to schools during the pandemic is called the 'catch-up fund'. We don't use language like this with the children. There is not going to be, nor has there been, a narrowing of the curriculum as a result of the model. The ICT suite up to this point has been out of use due to issues of bubbles crossing, however a timetable has now been worked out so that this can start being used again this term. In the meantime, children have still done Computing work using iPads in their classrooms. Foundation subject and science work is still going ahead as normal. We had considered a September start for the model, however felt now was the best time to start it so that we can run this term as a trial and iron out any issues so that we can really hit the ground running in September should the trial be successful. The second we see a dip in the children's enjoyment of school, we will address this accordingly.

Can we get afterschool clubs up and running (not just sports but the arts, skateboarding, We Are Adventurers)?

We are limited by the bubbles with this, which is why we've not been able to run any of our clubs that are put on by external providers. The biggest issue is space. As Owl Club also have to run in a bubble system, they are using classrooms rather than just the hall, as well as all of the different outdoor areas. We are also still having to limit any outside visitors to school to only those that are essential. As soon as the guidance on bubbles changes we will be able

to have the clubs back up and running. It's also likely the external provider running as a bubble wouldn't be viable – even if there was any space.

Forest Crew, one day a week walking the children over to Chorlton Ees Nature Reserve for education on the environment. This initiative originally just ran for children in year 3 but was cut due to TA shortages back in 2018/2019. Many parents, including myself volunteered their time to run the initiative but a decision was made to cancel it. Could this be rolled out to all of the children in all years taking them out of the classroom for exercise and wider education?

The reason we had to stop running Forest Crew was due to a staffing capacity issue, which we still face. Parents did indeed kindly offer to help out with this, however our insurance policy would not allow it. Unfortunately this is not something we'd be able to use the catch-up fund for. We are keen as a school to see what we can do with other funding (such as Pupil Premium), so we will look into this further, as we know how beneficial this scheme is for children.

Could we consider bringing back Commando Joes? (An initiative which did receive a lot of criticism at the time because the company decided to send their instructors to the school in army fatigues, but in the end the children enjoyed getting out of the classroom and being involved in team building tasks)

We would not consider bringing this back as we now have a full time Sports Coach who delivers outdoor PE with a team building focus. DH agreed this had been a great initiative for our children.

Stay & Plays, which gave parents the opportunity to come into school and take part in lessons, see their child's work and ultimately feel on board with their education. When can this come back?

This is still not able to happen due to current Covid guidelines, however we will reintroduce this as soon as we are able to.

What about bringing back school performances; plays, music, dance? An opportunity for the children to come together and again experience in the arts and build confidence.

With regards to performances, the Year 6 Leavers' performance is still going ahead this year. Due to covid restrictions we could not do Christmas performances with parents in school last year, however we got around this by doing the performances virtually. Mrs Murray's work in music and drama also continues for all children on a weekly basis.

When will we restart music lessons, where children get the opportunity to learn an instrument from Year 3? Obviously, this has been a challenge this last year. These types of lessons have been running at High School since September with safeguards in place.

These lessons have not been running both due to our ongoing rule that limits visitors in school to only those that are essential. We are also aware of the financial impact the pandemic has had on many of our families and the fact that this means that many won't be able to pay for their child to have instrumental lessons in school, potentially making it a non-viable option financially for the school too. We have, however, introduced wider opportunities for music to take place in school once a week (at the moment this is for Year 4 children, but will work on rotation across year groups). Our plan is to hopefully get music instrument lessons back in school from September. We continue to commit funding to a specialist music teacher for Years 1 to 6.

What about school trips?

Again, as soon as the guidance allows it we will start running school trips again as we feel they are very important at our school.

What about the parent reading volunteers scheme?

Again, as soon as we can start having visitors in to school we will be able to start this up again.

Will sports day go ahead?

Yes, we are hoping that Sports Day can still go ahead as normal this year.

Can we reintroduce the before and after school lessons for maths and English that used to run for small targeted groups?

This is something we did in the past, however we found that the uptake was poor. This meant it would be too patchy a response to work in this situation and would not target enough children.

Could a teacher be employed to specifically teach larger intervention groups in the dance studio, which Miss Beech used to do with Year 6?

This still happens (with Mrs Wealleans in Years 5 & 6 and DH in Year 4), however would not be appropriate to use instead of the targetted learning model as it does not target enough children.

You mentioned earlier that as part of the model there will be feedback every 2 weeks- will this be for all parents?

This would be for children in the group needing more basic skills and missed learning coverage mainly. However, one of our parent governors queried this when we consulted the governing body on the model, and as a result it was agreed that we would introduce more parent conferencing all round. We have found in the past that when we do increase parent conferencing focussed on the work (eg. sending work home with feedback), it makes a massive difference. It is on DH's action list to see how we can do this and make it manageable for teachers.

How will we know which group our child is in?

We are finalising practicalities at the moment, however we will be able to let parents know which group their child is in once this has been done.

I am not sure at the moment where we're at with homework and reading, it feels like we need more of a 'working together' approach.

DH agreed with this, and explained that it is something we're looking into as a priority.

How will the model work logistically (eg. mornings, lunch times etc)?

Children will come in every morning and go into their usual classes to be registered before splitting off into their groups for the rest of the morning. Children then mix as a year group at lunchtime, then go back to their usual classes for the afternoon.

As a parent I really want to support and help out at home, I feel this has slipped recently and we're not getting enough information on how we can help.

DH to speak to SLT about how this can be improved when we decide on final practicalities of the running of the model.