

Name of School:	Woodside High School
Headteacher/Principal:	Gerry Robinson
Hub:	Compton
School type:	Secondary Academy
MAT (if applicable):	N/A

Date of this visit:	30 th September 2019
Estimate at last QA Review:	Good
Date of last QA Review:	19 th -21 st February 2018
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	15 th -16 th January 2014

1. Information about the visit

Woodside High School was visited by a Lead Reviewer, who spent one day reviewing the incremental coaching programme. This programme began in September 2018, and is a vehicle designed to drive whole school teaching and learning change, in line with the school development plan. The purpose of the visit was to evaluate how effective the programme has been in improving:

- Student outcomes
- Teaching and learning
- Continuing professional development
- Recruitment and retention

The school removed the grading of 3 formal lesson observations in September 2018. One area of investigation was therefore assessing how school leaders can know the quality of teaching, if formal grades have been removed.

The Lead Reviewer investigated the impact of incremental coaching at the school, through the following sequenced activities:

- Meeting the deputy headteacher
- 3 Lesson drop-ins
- Meeting 7 coaches

- Meeting 7 students (Years 9-11)
- Meeting 6 staff
- Meeting with the headteacher and deputy headteacher

2. Information about the school

- Woodside High School is an average-sized secondary school. However, pupil numbers are growing and will reach 1200 on roll by 2020.
- The school converted to an academy in November 2011.
- The school lies within an area of comparatively high socio-economic deprivation.
- A very large majority of pupils come from ethnic backgrounds other than White British. Consequently, the proportion of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) is well above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of SEN or Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) is above the national average.
- The numbers of pupils who join the school after the start of Year 7 and before the end of Year 11 is higher than in most schools.

3.1 Analysis of incremental coaching

The school removed formal lesson observations and learning walks in September 2018. A programme of incremental coaching began. Every teacher is coached by one of the 17 trained teacher and teaching assistant coaches.

Coaches do not line manage the teachers. Coaching is kept separate from performance appraisal. Coaches are a mix of lead teachers, excellent teachers, and teaching assistants. They are not necessarily middle or senior leaders.

Teacher and teaching assistants are observed for 10 minutes in the first week, then a week later there is a meeting between the teacher and coach, to agree ongoing targets. This process carries on throughout the academic year.

Staff are trusted as professionals to improve their own teaching. Coaches are given time to coach, which is prioritised.

The coach keeps a log of all meetings and targets. This is confidential between the teacher, coach, and deputy headteacher, the latter managing the whole programme. Coaches meet every half-term. They discuss the programme, as well as strengths in

teaching, and common areas for development. School leaders aim to use coaching as a way of developing staff training, as well as to streamline staff workload. This has the aim of further improving teacher recruitment and retention.

The incremental coaching programme links closely with key priorities on the school development plan. The focus for all teachers is always behaviour for learning, and ensuring this is secure before moving onto the termly focus areas.

The foci for the school and programme have been as follows:

2018-2019 Term 1 and 2: Questioning and challenge

2018-2019 Term 3: Feedback

2019-2020 Term 1: Feedback

2019-2020 Term 2: Boys' literacy and engagement

Evidence from the 3 lesson drop-ins observed was extremely positive. In each case, the reviewer and coach observed the learning in a 10 minutes lesson drop-in, and then discussed what had been observed, as well as answering questions about the coaching process.

In one Maths lesson, the teacher used an activity devised in consultation with her coach. This allowed Year 10 students to gain confidence and suggest the best ways to solve a more challenging vector displacement question. The teacher was able to teach the students to look for mathematical clues in the question, and students demonstrated a range of ideas. This showed the benefits of cross-subject coaching, as coaches can share good practice from their subject area with others. As one coach stated, "you teach the principles of Maths first, before the content". Therefore, coaching can be shown to have encouraged a more reflective whole school approach to learning.

In another Maths lesson, Year 7 pupils using red, amber and green colours, were able to answer algebra questions. The teacher could swiftly assess class understanding, and address misconceptions. Pupils then worked independently, again gaining confidence through applying what they had learned at the start of the lesson.

In a Design Technology lesson, Year 10 students used a "pass it on" questioning technique to develop class ideas about the advantages and disadvantages of the selection and reinforcement of materials. As a result of subject specific teaching, the students were able to develop their use of vocabulary.

In all 3 lesson drop-ins observed, the coach was proactive in talking with students and asking them about what they were learning, and how they were learning. Following each 10 minutes lesson drop-in, the coach accurately outlined to the reviewer the strengths and areas for development in the drop-ins. By removing grading, coaches are clearly able to evaluate teaching and learning. By having a clear teaching focus in every lesson drop-in, the quality of the 20 minutes coaching conversation is therefore higher, and leads to ongoing improvements.

Meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, 7 coaches, 6 teachers and 7 students were also positive. The deputy headteacher explained the intention of the coaching strategy in the school: "There has been a culture shift, from high stakes lesson observations to a more accurate reflection of the school's teaching and learning". These statements of intent matched with what was observed in lesson drop-ins and further meetings with coaches, teachers and students. Leaders are clear that coaching has worked extremely well due to a culture of trust being created over time. The deputy headteacher initially trained the 13 coaches, using the ideas of leveraged leadership. There is no hierarchy, and line management is taken out of the coaching programme. The programme is highly developmental. As the deputy headteacher explained, this has created "the lightbulb moment, as the teacher is given time to think for themselves.". The headteacher and deputy headteacher clearly understand the intention and methodology of highly successful coaching, which is bringing excellent results. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have rightly prioritised the coaching programme as a vehicle for school improvement. They have had the confidence to remove high stakes accountability measures across the school and place trust in their teachers. This is a move which has paid dividends.

Coaches enjoy coaching other teachers. The coaches remarked that coaching was "really good professional development" as they can share good practice and learn leadership skills. One coach stated that drop-ins showed "a positive journey", with each lesson drop-in marking a small concrete step on the way to improvement. Another coach said that he had asked the teacher "what do you want to work on?" in order to give ownership of the coaching process to the teacher. When asked about the benefits of coaching, the coaches said that the programme was the best they had seen in a school. One coach commented that this was "pure coaching", in an atmosphere of trust and development. The coach stated that a cultural shift across the school in the last year or so had allowed this to happen. She stated "we are trusted now."

Teachers were unanimously extremely positive. One commented that "this is the best training I have ever had". Her own class exam results have improved greatly due to the coaching programme: 81% achieving 4+ (28% in 2018) and 48% achieving 5+ (15% in 2018). More than the 6 allocated teachers came along to the meeting room at lunchtime, demonstrating a desire to tell the reviewer how much they enjoyed the programme. Teachers said they feel valued as professionals. One teacher remarked that the 20 minutes coaching conversations, following the 10 minutes lesson drop-ins, were "not randomly generated, a lot of thought goes into it". Another teacher stated that teachers "can discuss the positives, it is so refreshing, it feels good, I'm doing this every time".

Teachers saw the value of the fortnightly meeting. One teacher stated that "we make it happen because we want it" when asked about the scheduling of meetings. Another

teacher remarked that “hand on heart this has helped me to improve as a teacher, it came at the right time, when I needed it”. Teachers commented that the meetings were positive, and that having a coach from a different subject area was very beneficial, saying that this offered them “a second pair of eyes, from a different subject, and not a teacher saying, “I do this”.”

Teachers enjoyed sharing good practice, saying that they “want to learn from as many books as possible”. Coaching was said to be “positive and non- judgemental, supportive”, because “we’re all in the same boat.... your coach is being coached also.... (it is) much more inclusive”. Teachers also benefited from the developmental nature of coaching, saying that “the system is not rigid, people are free to not stagnate, they can change, it is fluid”.

One teacher remarked that “after your NQT year, you are only seen if something is going wrong.... being coached is normal as a trainee and NQT.... the conversation should go on through your career”. New staff could also see the benefits, commenting that coaching is “amazing, I am so supported, I had nothing like this in my previous school”. New teachers made comparisons to systems in previous schools where they had been scrutinised with formal lesson observations and how little this had helped them to develop.

The meeting with 7 students was also very positive. They realised that teachers were working together to improve teaching. Students said that “teachers talk about the students of different abilities, comparing students who are not struggling with those who are doing less well; they compare why it’s effective, and what the teacher is doing with the ones who understand”. Students were articulate about their learning and were able to explain the varying feedback strategies employed by teachers. They were aware of teachers being frequently present in classrooms and working together. Students remarked that coaches “write notes, and talk to the teacher about the lesson plan, and make sure the students understand what to do”. They were aware of the positive benefits of coaching. Students were able to accurately describe effective teaching strategies in their lessons, which relate to differentiation for challenge, questioning, boys’ literacy and engagement, and feedback. These are priorities on the school development plan, which demonstrates that coaching is having a positive impact on classroom teaching.

3.2 Evaluation of the impact of incremental coaching

Student outcomes

As a result of the whole school incremental coaching programme, there have been

significant improvements in student outcomes. Students have benefited from more regular lesson drop-ins and teacher coaching.

Headline figures demonstrate improvements in achievement and progress.

	2017-2018	2018-2019
Average Points Score on Entry	27.0	27.0
Eng/Ma 5+	35%	35%
Eng/ma 4+	55%	67%
Attainment 8	45.6	47.03
Progress 8	+0.27	+0.40

English/Maths grade 4+ headline measure improved significantly, an increase of 12%

Attainment 8 score increased (by 1.4 to 47)

Progress 8 Score has improved significantly to +0.40 (well above national average)

Incremental coaching has resulted in improved outcomes. Improved achievement (2018-2019) demonstrates that incremental coaching has resulted in improved student achievement. This is strong positive evidence of the beneficial impact of the incremental coaching programme as a driver for positive change in teaching and learning.

Teaching and learning

Formal grading was removed in September 2018. Leaders know that teaching and learning is improving. This is evident in improved outcomes and the coaching logs, which record improvements over 16 lesson drop-ins per year. This has brought greater consistency in practice and closing the gap in key priority areas.

Coaching has secured improvements to teaching and moved more teaching from consistently good to consistently outstanding.

Coaching logs were seen and demonstrated progress in teaching and learning over time. There was evidence from the visit that teachers were meeting their personalised targets and improving their teaching. Following lesson drop-ins, teachers act upon targets given by their coach.

More regular lesson drop-ins (16 throughout the year) mean that teachers are observed more often. Teachers know that coaches will drop into any of their lessons once per fortnight. This is far more realistic than formal lesson observations once per term. Teachers are also able to observe their coaches teach. This gives greater credibility to

the process.

In addition, no advance notice is given of the lesson that will be observed. This means that lesson drop-ins reflect the quality of teaching and learning more accurately. A wider range of classes are observed. Instead of teachers being able to prepare well in advance for certain classes, three times a year, there are now much more frequent lesson drop-ins. There is greater consistency of approach. Once teachers demonstrate secure behaviour for learning, there is a clear whole school focus upon areas relating to the whole school priorities, linked to the school development plan.

Coaches work across different subjects. This means that good practice can be shared more widely across the school. If there are any issues in teaching and learning, the trained team of coaches quickly communicate with the deputy headteacher in charge of coaching.

The deputy headteacher holds all coaching log records. She is therefore able to oversee whole school teaching and learning at any time. She can more accurately assess whole school strengths and areas for development in teaching and learning. Coaching logs give leadership a more regularly updated and more honest evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Coaching logs show improvements for teachers. Teachers in 2018-2019 had 16 lesson drop-ins, with fortnightly coaching meetings. This means that there was continual and sustained improvement. Coaches are trained and leading teachers. By removing 3 formal graded lessons with 16 lesson drop-ins, the process is more open and honest. By removing 3 "high stakes" formal observations, staff know they can have drop-in lesson observations at any time. This makes for a more accurate assessment of the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

The half-termly coaches' report enables the deputy headteacher to chair the meeting, and to be able to assess the whole school strengths and areas for development. Effective teaching and learning strategies are shared in this meeting, along with regular continuing professional development. This brings further improvements in the leadership of teaching across the school.

Continuing professional development

Coaches interviewed told the reviewer that being a coach has developed their leadership skills, as they have coached teachers and kept regular and detailed coaching logs.

All teachers interviewed confirmed they met their coaches in a two-weekly cycle.

Within that fortnight, a 10 minute lesson drop-in takes place to view developments, followed by a 20 minute coaching conversation. This coaching conversation focuses on an area of teaching and learning. All coaches and teachers separately agreed on the process, demonstrating consistency. They also agreed that the school made coaching a priority in terms of time given and protected.

Teachers interviewed appreciated the concept of marginal gains. They preferred receiving fortnightly smaller action points to improve. They understood that lesson drop-ins could accurately assess how effective these action steps are.

Incremental coaching has resulted in ongoing training in teaching for all staff, and training in leadership skills for all coaches. The use of teaching assistants to coach their peers is very positive.

Coaches have been able to observe good teaching techniques and share these in the half termly meeting. By observing other teachers, they have thought more carefully about how to improve their own teaching. Coaching logs and interviews demonstrated that the coaching programme is leading to continuous and personalised training. School leaders oversee this and can tailor training appropriately.

Recruitment and retention

Because the coaching programme represents high quality continuous professional development, teacher recruitment and retention has improved. The 17 coaches rightly regard holding an incremental coaching post as a career development step.

Teachers see the value of the programme. Their own teaching has improved. Coaching observations are less “high stakes” and artificial. There is no more over planning of termly lesson observations. Instead, teaching is observed as it really is. A coaching log is produced on a weekly basis. This has helped teacher workload and led to improved staff morale and wellbeing. The separation of coaching observations from performance management has led to more trust and transparency about specific areas of development. Interviews with stakeholders demonstrate that trust has been built over time. There is an “open door” policy, with more open accountability.

Teachers questioned responded positively to questions about the nature and impact of incremental coaching. They said there was a correct focus on their typical classroom teaching, rather than just one lesson every term. They have become accustomed to being observed fortnightly, and the focus of their planning is on teaching higher quality lessons all the time. The reduction in artificial “high stakes” lesson observations, allied to the professional development offered by coaching, has resulted in better recruitment and

retention.

All staff interviewed would like the coaching programme to continue, as they can see the benefits to their teaching and professional development. All staff interviewed were very positive about the coaching programme.

3.3 Area 1 – Even better if...

- The programme of incremental coaching can be continued into the longer term, with further training of current coaches, and a view to train some more coaches in the near future to build capacity.
- Coaches could occasionally observe each other's coaching conversations, for professional development.
- There were more schools starting incremental coaching programmes as a result of shared practice. This could include coaches training new coaches in these schools.

4. Summary

The incremental coaching programme has brought improvements in:

- Student outcomes
- Teaching and learning
- Continuing professional development
- Recruitment and retention

This programme has demonstrated benefits to the school, evidenced in quantitative data (school outcomes) and qualitative data (coaching logs).

Ofsted do not grade lessons. The new Ofsted Framework does not expect internal performance data to be given to inspectors. Inspectors will not ask to see internal tracking of teacher performance. Many outstanding schools have moved away from the grading of formal lesson observations, however this programme is more meaningful than the moves seen in other schools where they have simply replaced grading, but high-stakes observations continue.

Therefore, the only virtue of formal graded lessons might be to inform leaders about the real quality of teaching. But since these grades are more than often artificially arrived at, a more reliable measure would be the frequent feedback of coaching lesson observations, recorded in logs and coordinated by the leaders. Any teaching not

meeting required standards can be addressed in the same ways as before, with tailored support outside of the coaching programme.

Since September 2019, inspectors visit lessons alongside middle and senior leaders, to conduct “deep dive” enquiries, in order to evaluate the typical quality of education. The incremental coaching programme is highly effective preparation for this, as it empowers leadership at all levels to be articulate about intent, implementation and impact.

Teaching staff were unanimous in supporting the coaching programme. Students also said that they could see improvements in their learning, as coaches were advising teachers on a much more regular basis. The students spoken to were very knowledgeable about how they learn best in lessons at the school, testimony to the benefits of coaching. They also knew their next steps to improve.

In summary, the programme of incremental coaching represents a highly effective and successful strategy to drive whole school teaching and learning change, in line with the school development plan. Evidence from this evaluation demonstrates the programme continues to develop good and outstanding teaching and learning at the school. It is a programme which should be developed for the longer term and should be implemented in other schools.

Andy Foster
Challenge Partners Lead Reviewer
4th October 2019