

**IAG Gold Standard assessment –
Humberston School, Humberston, Grimsby**

External Assessment carried out on 16th March 2009

**Assessor – Vince Barrett
In attendance – Paula Shaw, Curriculum Adviser**

Overview

Humberston School is a smaller than average mixed secondary school, gaining specialisms in mathematics and computing in 2006. It is located in the village of Humberston to the west of Cleethorpes in North East Lincolnshire and serves an area of mixed socio-economic circumstances but with a significant number of relatively affluent households. There are currently 715 learners on roll, virtually all attending are White British, live within walking distance of the school and very few are entitled to free school meals. However, the percentage with a statement of special educational need or with a learning difficulty or disability (LDD) is higher than national averages. The school site comprises a range of buildings constructed in the 1970s with a number of temporary classrooms to accommodate additional learners as the school has grown. There are plans to replace these existing buildings, through Building Schools for the Future (BSF) funding, with a new purpose-built school, starting in 2010.

At the time of this assessment, Humberston School had recently been deemed by Ofsted to require special measures - due in large part to identified weaknesses in the management of the school at that time and following a significant downturn in GCSE A*-C outcomes in 2008. A very experienced interim Headteacher has now been appointed, there is a new management structure in place and a detailed review of all policies, procedures and practices is being carried out. Consequently, the school is in a transition phase although significant developments have already taken place to address the shortcomings identified in the Ofsted inspection of December 2008.

This school has long recognised that high quality information, advice and guidance (IAG) are important factors in ensuring the well-being and progress of all learners. To build on this, changes with regard to IAG have included the vertical grouping of learners, the very recent introduction of a new system for behaviour management and development of a House (Fen, Thorpe, Beck and Wold) system to provide learners with opportunities to build stronger relationships with those in other year groups and also with staff. Learners are beginning to identify strongly with their House and all interviewed understood how the system and the new school behaviour management policy operate. (See Element 3.2). A new tutorial Personal, Social, Health, Citizenship and Economic education (PSHCEe) programme has also been devised which is valued both by delivering tutors and learners.

Assessment

Prior to the formal assessment, Paula Shaw, Connexions Curriculum Adviser for North East Lincolnshire, worked closely with key personnel in the school assisting in the compilation of the self-assessment form in preparation for external assessment. A portfolio of evidence containing documented IAG policy and practice was provided to the assessor prior to the date of assessment and a planned programme for assessment prepared. During the course of the assessment, I interviewed Jim Cunningham (Interim Headteacher); Darren Short, (Assistant Headteacher with IAG responsibility); Julie Larway (SENCO); Janine Sorensen (Head of Thorp House); Simon Sprague (Deputy Headteacher); Claire Hanley (Matron); Jez O'Kane (Learning Mentor) Ann Meekums (Librarian) Brian Bendall (Connexions Personal Adviser) and many young people randomly selected during the course of the assessment.

The assessment procedure took a full day. In addition to the interviews defined above, a visual inspection of the available facilities for provision of information, advice and guidance was carried out and all interviews and observations were later cross-referenced against the portfolio of paper evidence pre-submitted by the school. This, and additional evidence collected during the assessment demonstrate each Element and Component of the North East Lincolnshire Gold Standard for Information, Advice and Guidance as described in summary below:

Element 1 – Accessible and Visible resources

Component 1: There will be one or more information areas, open at clearly displayed times, accessible to all learners and providing a range of appropriate, current and impartial information which meets all needs

There is a centrally located library, doubling as a teaching resource, to which all learners have access during lunchtimes and after school. This facility is staffed by Ann Meekums, a qualified librarian who is available to assist learners in research and information finding. There are PCs with internet access for additional independent information research.

The Connexions Personal Adviser (Careers), Brian Bendall, has a designated room containing up to date careers information, a comfortable interview area with phone, internet access and space for careers-related displays. This is located adjacent to the library and learners are able to drop in for careers advice and guidance and to research labour market information via the local LMI website (www.lmihumber.co.uk) and course information via the Area Prospectus (www.lincs2.co.uk).

Additional information materials are distributed directly to learners. National publications such as 'Which Way Now?', EMA packs, the local i4u Planner, and work-related learning materials are all used to support learners.

Component 2: All staff involved in providing information will be familiar with its content and purpose

All key school staff and external IAG providers are familiar with the range and content of the information available as described in Element 1.1 above and help learners in gaining information appropriate to their needs. Assistant Headteacher Darren Short, who has responsibility for IAG provision, attends relevant training and local authority briefings which are disseminated to IAG practitioners in school by way of tutor meetings and in-house training sessions. The Heads of House work together to ensure that quality and consistency is maintained in terms of pastoral support and delivery of information, advice and guidance.

Element 2 – Accessible Advice and Guidance

Component 1: Internal and external advice and guidance practitioners will collectively possess the necessary skills, knowledge, training and qualifications to identify and respond to each learner's needs.

Connexions staff and other external IAG professionals all receive training by their employing organisations. The Heads of House ensure that tutorial staff have the necessary skills and training to ensure high quality IAG provision takes place in tutor sessions and all staff have attended twilight training sessions on IAG principles and practice.

The Connexions PA (Careers) is available to complement the work of the school's IAG team. Darren Short works closely with the PA to ensure that referrals for careers interviews are timely and appropriate. Discussions are currently underway to further involve the work of the PA in the provision of careers information, advice and guidance into the broader aspects of the school's curriculum delivery and for continuously improving the careers element of IAG available to all learners. Key pastoral staff are receiving training in Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) which will further enhance delivery of IAG.

All members of the school staff and external guidance practitioners have CRB clearance.

Component 2: Advice and guidance practitioners will know about the work of other IAG providers who may be better placed to meet learners' needs

Communication between external and internal agencies is excellent due to regular meetings and the well-structured organisation of the pastoral team; these provide a strong basis for partnership working. There is a Support for Learning Group which comprises a wide range of internal and external advice and guidance practitioners. This multi-agency team meets weekly to ensure the needs of identified learners with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) are discussed and appropriately met. The work of Heads of House and tutors complements the focus of this group and a referral system to external IAG providers as appropriate is in operation.

Careers interviews are offered to learners during the latter part of Year 10 and throughout Year 11. Learners may also self-refer at any time and the availability of the Connexions PA is well advertised through the tutorial system. The PA has weekly meetings with Heads of Houses to discuss individual learners. There are also regular pastoral and academic team meetings which can involve attendance by external IAG practitioners.

Element 3 – Linked IAG Provision

Component 1: The provision of linked IAG will be part of the remit of a senior manager within the organisation or service

Assistant Headteacher Darren Short is responsible for information, advice and guidance systems within the school and works closely with the Senior Leadership Team and Heads of House to ensure that IAG provision is given a high priority. The mixed-age vertical tutoring system has been in place since September 2008 and learners report that this has helped them to get to know people in other year cohorts which they say has been beneficial in addressing issues such as bullying. Isolated incidences of bullying are dealt with speedily and effectively. The school has a strong family ethos and provides a supportive caring atmosphere for staff and learners alike.

Component 2: Practitioners will make clear to learners the links between IAG services and where necessary support learners in their transition between these services

In addition to the multi-agency meetings described in Element 2.2 above, there is an effective and supportive internal network that is able to respond quickly and appropriately to learners' needs. At the centre of this is the school's matron, Claire Hanley, who is available to learners and staff throughout each day to ensure immediate attention and/or

referral to other agencies. School staff are familiar with the work of the agencies available to support young people and the four Heads of House take responsibility for the co-ordination of all personal, educational and vocational education and guidance with support from Darren Short.

The school now has in place a clear system for the reporting of incidents or concerns and to address the management of low-level disruptive behaviour identified by Ofsted as an issue. This is a five-stage procedure starting with verbal and then formal warnings. At Stage 3, staff use Behaviour Check Forms to record any serious behavioural concerns or incidents which are then passed to the most appropriate team member for action which varies, depending on the nature of the issue. All issues and actions taken are logged and stored centrally. This whole-school approach should ensure patterns of behaviour and recurring issues are identified, action taken and referrals to appropriate agencies made. All staff and learners consulted were clear about these new procedures.

Connexions Humber draws up an annual Partnership Agreement with the school where appropriate allocations of PA time agreed and links with other agencies defined. This process serves to evaluate and review the provision offered by Connexions within the school and work is currently underway to further develop the involvement of the Connexions PA.

Component 3: Practitioners will recognise professional boundaries and know which alternative provision is appropriate for signposting or referral to meet each learner's guidance needs

Internal and external IAG practitioners working in the school come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. All are aware of the remit of others and referrals are made easily between IAG personnel in order to ensure that specific questions on topics such as finance, health, accommodation or transition are addressed by the most appropriate practitioner.

Element 4. Quality and Delivery of IAG

Component 1: IAG will be targeted at the needs of learners and informed by social and economic priorities at local regional and national levels

As stated in the overview to this report, the school is situated in area of relative social and economic advantage but it does serve a fully comprehensive learner population and so has to cater for a wide range of support needs. Consequently, there are now in place the protocols and procedures described throughout this report for quick and sensitive identification of those learners requiring additional support and to ensure that their academic, social or personal guidance needs are met. The school has developed strong links with a wide range of external support and guidance practitioners such as health professionals, educational psychologists, educational welfare officers and Children's services in order to help meet those needs. There are good links with home and parents are very appreciative of the learner support offered by the school.

Component 2: A planned personal development programme based upon DfES/DCSF national recommendations will underpin IAG

There is a Personal, Social and Health, Citizenship and Economic education (PSHCEe) programme which runs from Years 7 -11 and is underpinned by a detailed programme of study and a handbook for all delivery staff. It is taught via discrete curriculum time of one lesson per week on a rotational basis but the themes of these lessons are continued through the tutorial sessions which build upon PSHCEe learning. During this assessment, I witnessed a Year 11 lesson addressing road safety. All learners were engaged and interested and were raising some fascinating points about road safety in the locality.

In addition to this programme, all Year 10 learners undertake a community placement with local organisations for one afternoon a week over a 3 or 4 week period.

Element 5. Diversity of IAG Provision

Component 1: IAG provision will recognise and reflect the diversity of learners' needs and promote equality of opportunity and access

As indicated elsewhere, the school serves a wide range of learners and there is evidence of the development of much-improved monitoring systems to track all learners' progress. This is in response to Ofsted's identification of learner progress tracking as a weakness. There is now a very detailed tutor mentoring scheme whereby every learner is given individual time with their tutor on six occasions every year to discuss progress, attendance, behaviour, achievements and concerns. Effort, Behaviour, Home Working and Attainment (EBHA) are each scored on a 1 to 4 scale (1: outstanding to 4: inadequate) Targets are agreed and each intervention is recorded on a Tutor Mentoring Record, all of which informs the termly report. In time, this should ensure that each individual's academic, personal and social progress is accurately logged and tracked and any support or IAG requirements identified. This tightly structured tutorial programme is complemented by a team of Learning Mentors (See Element 8.1) who work with learners requiring additional individual support.

Component 2: IAG will be available in other more neutral premises whenever appropriate

Learners are aware of the Connexions Centre in Grimsby and some have used this facility. Off-site consultation with other specialised practitioners (educational psychologist, health professionals etc) is arranged as required.

Element 6. Impartiality of IAG Provision

Component 1: IAG will promote equally all options available and open to learners based on the defined needs and circumstances of each individual to ensure as far as possible, accurate matching of stated need to help and support

As the school is situated to the south of Grimsby, the most popular options post-16 are into full-time college provision at either Grimsby Institute for vocational courses or to Franklin College for academic course choices. A relatively small number choose to go on to apprenticeships.

Learners are offered a wealth of opportunities to gather further learning or training information without bias. This is achieved through the careers education element of the PSHCEe curriculum and by complementary activities such as the annual careers fair, use of the local 'i4u' Student Planner, open access to the Area Prospectus and supported use of the inbuilt Common Application Process (CAP).

Component 2: IAG will support learners in making informed decisions and will not favour any particular learner or groups of learners in order to address institutional targets or goals

As an 11-16 school, Humberston has no vested interest in promoting any post-16 learning opportunity. Learners are given open access to all information about the full range of provision available and all learners in Key Stage 4 can have confidential and impartial careers interviews. The two local colleges and the Consortium for Learning, which represents all work-based learning providers, are welcomed into school and the Area Prospectus (www.Lincs2.co.uk) is available to all. All learners interviewed during the day were aware of available opportunities and many were attending or had attended open evenings at Franklin College and Grimsby Institute.

Element 7 – IAG for Learning and Work

Component 1: IAG for learning and work will support learners in exploring the implications of possible career choices when planning their futures

The school offers a number of resources and activities that learners are encouraged to access which relate to further learning and work. Participation in Enterprise projects is encouraged and work experience is integrated into the overall curriculum. All learners in Key Stage 4 are entered for the 'Preparation for Working Life' and 'Enterprise and Employability' which, if successfully achieved at Level 2, together provide an additional full GCSE qualification.

Component 2: IAG practitioners with a careers focus will work closely with local employers to ascertain up-to-date LMI.

The Connexions PA works with learners to ensure they understand the local and national labour market and the school works with the Humber EBP to ensure that all receive work-related experience as a part of the curriculum. Learners are able to access the local website (www.lmihumber.co.uk) to obtain up-to-date information.

Component 3: IAG provision will ensure that all learners have access to a common 14-19 prospectus from the end of key stage 3 in order that they are made aware of opportunities and qualification requirements for study and training from the age of 14 and for further study, training or employment from the age of 16.

As mentioned in Element 6.2, all learners are encouraged to seek course information and make applications via the North East Lincolnshire Area Prospectus (www.lincs2.co.uk). At the time of this assessment, over 80 learners had made applications via the system which is well above the average for North East Lincolnshire schools. The Lincs2 Prospectus Co-ordinator, Liz Wild has worked with the school to ensure understanding of the use of the system.

Element 8 – IAG responsiveness to the needs of clients

Component 1: IAG practitioners will liaise with each other and all external agencies and services that provide support for learners

School procedures for agency liaison are clear and these include stated protocols for information sharing, child protection and data protection. Staff delivering the tutorial programme ensure that material is suitable for all learners and have regular meetings both formally and informally with each other and outside agencies. All learners are made aware of how to access information, advice and guidance in the school and all interviewed were quite clear about who to see for different IAG needs. Matron and other non-teaching staff provide very good non-judgmental 'listening ears' for learners when they need talk through sensitive issues.

There are also three full-time equivalent learning mentors who work with groups or with individuals to address matters such as raising self-esteem and confidence and generally developing positive social skills which are essential for life and work. Learning mentors can broker support tailored to the needs of individuals but they also offer a wide range of activities and information on interest groups and societies that are of appeal to all learners.

Component 2: IAG provision will ensure that available information is acknowledged and incorporated into advice and guidance sessions

All significant IAG interventions are logged in tutorial learner records and the Connexions PA also maintains learner guidance information in the CCIS Trakrekord database. All information held on learners is securely held and shared within current data protection legislation between practitioners to ensure the most effective support is provided.

Element 9 – Evaluation of IAG

Component 1: All IAG practitioners and learners are able to feed back their views on the provision within the organisation

Humberston School is founded on an ethos of pride in being a member of the school and enjoyment of the experiences it offers. All learners interviewed during this assessment said they feel safe, are happy to be at the school and most feel able to feed back on aspects of school life, including access to information advice and guidance, individually and through the House and tutorial systems. Several reported that they feel their views are listened to and acted upon – with particular reference to the development of the new behaviour reporting system defined in Element 3.2.

Recommendation

As stated in the overview to this report, Humberston School is still very much in the process of responding to Ofsted's placing of the school in special measures. The provision of information, advice and guidance was not deemed inadequate in the inspection but received a judgement of satisfactory. This report defines the procedures the school has since put in place to improve upon that judgement and, as a result of the introduction of effective tutoring, tracking, reporting and information-sharing systems, in addition to some existing good practice, all the elements and components of the North East Lincolnshire Gold Standard for Information, Advice and Guidance are now being addressed.

I make the recommendation that Humberston School be awarded the Standard as, on the date of this assessment, I judged that necessary IAG policies, protocols and systems are in place for the provision of good quality and appropriate IAG. Learner feedback regarding IAG available to them is very positive and staff are positive about the changes being made. There is, however, still some way to go to ensure that all the new systems deliver expected outcomes over time. With this in mind, my recommendation for the award is on the proviso that a re-assessment is scheduled for the summer term of 2010 by which time the systems will have been embedded and tested, a new headteacher will have been in post for a full academic year and Ofsted will have worked with the school to ensure that all previously identified weaknesses have been overcome.

Vince Barrett
Connexions Humber Gold Standard Assessor
21st March 2009

Date of Recommendation: 25th March 2009

Date of Award:

Date for re-assessment: July 2010