

Report to Science College Management Group

Summer Term 2006

Progress since January 2006

In January we received a detailed report showing the strengths and weaknesses of the progress of the Science College. The report made a series of detailed recommendations which were presented to the Science College Management Group in February, together with the department's response.

Consequently, the key focus for the Science College has been to address those areas of concern detailed in the report. The improvements made in meeting these concerns are shown in more detail in a separate document. One major area of concern was the progress made in meeting the objectives of the community aspect of the bid. Furthermore, Mr Smith clearly demonstrated that Science/Maths should be lead subjects resulting in the improving the quality of teaching and learning on a whole school basis. Progress in these two aspects is discussed in more detail below.

Developments in Community work

Primary

Since January there have been series of regular visits to the Crypt by Y6 pupils from Barnwood Park and Hempsted primary schools. They have used our practical equipment to develop their pupils' practical skills. In addition, they have used our new data loggers to perform different investigations.

Crypt Science staff have also visited schools to help support their teaching of practical work. The department has also invested in electronics equipment which schools are able to borrow.

From September, both the Grange and Heron Schools will be making visits to use our labs, together with some of the equipment, again to develop their pupils' practical skills.

Secondary

It has proved very difficult to make progress with our nominated secondary partner, Beaufort Community College. There have been discussions at SLT level with regard to clarifying objectives, which have now been agreed. Unfortunately, organising meetings with the relevant members of their Science departments has proved difficult.

However, there have been meetings with Severn Vale School and the focus will be the development of the new GCSE Science course starting next September. The Head of Science has also attended meetings at the Crypt looking at the development of our Virtual Learning Environment.

It was suggested by Smith that the Crypt should take a lead in the local educational community. Unfortunately, our application to the SSTA to become a Lead ICT in Science teacher was unsuccessful. We are now currently investigating major changes to the delivery of the KS3 Science curriculum. Following a very positive response to our presentation at a recent Head of Science meeting in Hucclecote, we propose to set up a working Party, probably with other local Grammar schools, chaired by the Head of Chemistry, to investigate our proposals further with view to implementation in Sept 2007.

Local Community

We have had some very productive meetings with our local PCT, and are setting up a support group, hosted at the Crypt, for elderly patients in the local community. The Expert Patient Programme (EPP) is a national initiative closely linked to case management. It is a course which helps those with chronic health conditions to manage and cope with their conditions more effectively and appropriately. The programme will start next academic year, with weekly sessions. This should fulfil one of the key community objectives.

The Crypt held its first Science Fair, open to all members of our local community. Due to the extended illness of the member of staff responsible for this initiative, the attendance was less than expected, but it proved a trial run for what will hopefully be a much more impressive Fair next year.

In September we will have our first Science Community lecture, open to all our local partner schools and community, which will be given by Trevor Bayliss OBE.

Business Community

As previously reported, we have continued to experience great difficulty in working with any of our local businesses. Letters have been sent to those companies that were contacted originally regarding the science Bid. An article was written for the school newspaper which invited parents in business to get involved. Finally, the issue was raised at a recent full Governors' meeting. All these attempts have resulted in just a couple of polite refusals.

Whole School Improvement

As well as contributing to the development of our local community, the specialist subjects are expected to have an impact on a whole-school basis.

We have decided to concentrate on two key areas within the school. Firstly, we will support other departments in the introduction of ICT as a teaching and learning tool. This will be done by offering support sessions for any staff who would like extra training on developments in ICT - including the intranet and . We will also be a lead department in the development of 'Kaleidos', the school's Virtual Learning Environment, which will be introduced from September.

Secondly, we will be involved the development of less experienced staff, such as PGCE students and NQTs as well as any others that would like a refresher session. Our lead teacher will contribute to a support programme run by the school's ASTs, with sessions that may include 3-part lesson and effective questioning techniques.

The Head of Chemistry has been a member of the Assessment for Learning pilot group this year and has been responsible for the development of this whole-school initiative by contributing to staff INSET sessions and working with the LEA consultant.

The audit of cross-curricular links suggested in the Smith report will be completed by the end of this term. The Science Department will then offer support and development in the delivery of those topics within the different subject areas.

Miscellaneous

In addition to the work already described, there are other developments that do not fit into any of the above categories.

We will continue to provide a wide range of curriculum enrichment activities. Some of them will be 'regulars' such as visits to universities, gifted and talented work, cross-curricular projects, and an expanded Science club. From September a new activity will be a regular guest speaker programme for GCSE and A level students. We are investigating the possibility of setting up a sixth-form mentoring support programme for pupils in KS3 and 4. In addition, the possibility of having a whole school 'Health' day is being proposed for the Easter term. To challenge the high flyers at GCSE, the department is investigating the possibility of top set pupils taking part of their GCSE science exams half way through Y10.

Summary

The department has made major strides in addressing the issues highlighted by Smith and, in doing so, should be looking forward to successful re-designation in about 18 month's time.

Dr Tim Willmott
Science College Director
June 2006