



## Lymm High School School Improvement Plan: Themes & Priorities, 2015-2018

This document provides an outline of the key themes and priorities for the development of Lymm High School over the next three years. It will be used by senior leadership, middle leaders and support staff team leaders to inform the more detailed action plans that they have for their respective areas. These plans will be reviewed three times a year to ensure that we are making sufficient progress towards our objectives.

The themes and priorities outlined here came about as a result of consultation with parents, students, governors, teaching and support staff in the summer term of 2015. It has also been written with the Lymm High School Charter in mind, which sets out the enduring aims and principles of the school. For each theme, this document outlines our:

- **Key objectives:** what we are trying to achieve
- **Moral purpose:** why we are trying to achieve it
- **Success criteria:** how we will know we have achieved it

The key themes and priorities are:

<i>Achievement for All</i>
<i>Excellent Teaching</i>
<i>An Inclusive School for All Abilities</i>
<i>Professional Learning Culture</i>
<i>Behaviour &amp; Ethos</i>
<i>Extra-Curricular Activities</i>
<i>Community Links</i>
<i>Communication with Parents</i>
<i>Learning Environment</i>
<i>School Finances</i>

The document is intended to be aspirational, but also realistic and very honest. We start from the principle that great schools keep it simple, relentlessly focusing their efforts on getting the basics right. You will not find any highly original ideas here, and we believe this is the right approach. When the basics are right, schools are fantastic places in which to learn and work and students, parents and staff tend to be happy.

Finally, it should be noted that this document is by no means exhaustive; there is a great deal more going on in the school than suggested here and plenty more objectives for improvement. There are also many other measures we use to monitor our performance over time that are not included (for example,

figures on attendance, punctuality, exclusions, rewards given to students, parental engagement and destinations of our students in terms of further education, training or employment).

## **Achievement for All**

**Objective:** Academic outcomes have historically been high at Lymm High School, but we are capable of better and recognise that expectations need to be higher. We want every single one of our students to leave with the very best set of qualifications and grades of which they are capable, regardless of their background or prior ability.

**Moral Purpose:** Examination results matter hugely to the life chances of young people and, whilst education must always be about more than raw academic outcomes, we make no apology for putting academic excellence at the heart of our vision for a great school.

**Success Criteria:** We are served by excellent primary schools and tend to have an able intake to begin with. Therefore, our chief measure of success will be comparisons with schools in similar circumstances. Our aim for the next three years is to be in at least the top 20% of similar schools in terms of progress made by all key groups of students in our school.

### **Review (July 2016):**

In line with the moral purpose outlined above, significant changes have been made to performance management systems and other means of holding teachers and leaders to account. Tracking and monitoring of student performance is much tighter and interventions systems (especially in Year 11) have been more focused and comprehensive. Overall, staff feedback (especially from heads of departments) is that we have already significantly raised the profile of the importance of academic success. All these things will help to improve performance over the next few years.

In the current climate of changes to exam specifications and national volatility in terms of grades, it is a brave (or foolish?!) headteacher who makes very specific predictions about exam results and we will update this section after the summer results. Nevertheless, we are prepared to make three predictions at this point:

- We expect headline GCSE results to be even better than last year
- We expect results for disadvantaged students (the group that performed least well last year) to be a good deal better than last year
- Headline A' level results will be lower. We have always known this would be the case and nobody should be alarmed. This cohort was the one that suffered most from the instability the school faced 3-4 years ago and, perhaps unsurprisingly, a large number decided to go elsewhere for their sixth form education (there are 60 students fewer in Year 13 than Year 12). Disproportionate numbers of those who chose not to stay with us were high attaining students; it therefore follows that headline attainment figures at A' level will be lower. However, the crucial point is that we expect **progress** measures (i.e. the value we have added given students' starting points) to be at least as strong as last year; if so, we will be very pleased.

## Excellent Teaching

**Objective:** There are some superb teachers at Lymm High School and the standard of teaching generally is good. The objective here is to ensure that teaching is consistently excellent. This starts with the need to significantly raise our expectations of what young people are capable of, so that lessons contain higher levels of challenge for all abilities (including differentiated work where appropriate) and that all students are fully engaged in the intended learning. Part of this drive to raise expectations will include the regular setting and marking of rigorous homework, something that we recognise is not consistent enough at the moment. Similarly, we want to increase the consistency with which students see their work marked and are given high quality feedback.

**Moral Purpose:** Students will not achieve their potential without excellent teaching. They only get one chance at a secondary school education and their success or otherwise ought not to be determined by the vagaries of the timetable; they are entitled to the best, whoever is teaching them. Homework is an important part of learning and all students deserve to be taught by teachers who recognise this by regularly setting and marking it.

**Success Criteria:** Monitoring data (e.g. lesson observations, learning walks and assessment checks) will demonstrate an overall rise in the quality of teaching and assessment, in all subjects and across all key stages. In particular, there will be greater levels of challenge and engagement. Records will demonstrate that homework is being regularly set and marked for all students and parent surveys will recognise this improvement.

### **Review (July 2016):**

We are very pleased with the progress made in this area and we are gathering increasingly robust evidence to support our belief that things are improving rapidly.

Visits from a senior local authority advisor (who is also a qualified Ofsted inspector) have confirmed our view that the quality of teaching across the school is clearly improving. This is further supported by visits from other headteachers, who have been very complimentary about what they have seen. Next year, we will focus more than ever on improving the levels of challenge in lessons for all students.

Show My Homework has been a great success, with the vast majority of parents telling us that they have found it very useful. Most parents also seem to agree that the amount of homework being set has increased markedly from previous years. Show My Homework also allows leaders in school to monitor the amount being set and this means that we can see most teachers are now setting homework in line with the school policy. Nevertheless, we recognise that consistency can still be better in this regard, as can the consistency in the quality of the homework that is being set.

Similarly, our monitoring systems (as well as feedback from parents and students) demonstrate that marking has improved significantly since the introduction of a new policy at the start of the year; there is more of it and of an increasingly higher quality. Again, this has been supported

by quality assurance visits from external advisors and headteachers. At the same time, we know it is not as consistent as it could be (the perennial challenge for any large secondary school) and will keep working hard at this.

## **Inclusive School for All Abilities**

**Objective:** One of the current strengths of the school is the way in which our students are cared for as individual human beings – although we are a large school, students and parents often comment that it does not feel like that. We want to keep this feeling. We also want to keep working hard to ensure that we have a highly inclusive school that meets the needs of *all* individuals within our community, where everybody feels happy and a part of all aspects of school life. This includes a recognition that our academically most able students need to be fully stretched and provided with an enrichment programme that allows them to gain entry to the top universities, including Oxford and Cambridge. It also means making sure that students with special educational needs are similarly supported and pushed to achieve their full potential.

**Moral Purpose:** As a school that is proud to be comprehensive, we have a duty to represent the whole of our community, to ensure every single student feels part of our school community and is given the opportunity to realise their full potential. This applies as much to the most able students as it does to those of average or below average academic ability.

**Success Criteria:** Student and parent feedback will continue to say that pastoral care is strong and that students are happy coming to school. A programme for academically gifted students will be in place, with students and parents reporting high levels of satisfaction with this programme and the numbers of students gaining places at top universities (including Oxford and Cambridge) continuing to rise. The progress made by students with special education needs will continue to improve.

### **Review (July 2016):**

Care of our students continues to be a strength, with the results of the 'ParentView' survey in February showing, for example, that 95% of parents say their child is happy at school, 98% saying they feel safe and 92% saying they are well looked after (all figures which are well above national averages). Regular student voice activities confirm this, with Student Services in particular getting consistently excellent feedback about the way they look after our young people.

We launched the Scholars Programme in the autumn and are very pleased with the pace at which that has developed; a good number of trips and activities have already been organised for all year groups and feedback has been positive. Over the next couple of years, we will develop this further – but also do all we can to improve the quality of provision for those academically very able students who have just missed out on the formal scholars programme.

Mrs Bellars has done a fabulous job in her first year as SENCo and we have a detailed review of SEND provision planned for the autumn term next year, which will help us to further develop this area.

## Professional Learning Culture

**Objective:** We want all staff to be part of a culture of honest, critical reflection and desire for continuous improvement. They should feel part of a strong, supportive school community, trusted and invested in as professionals, with access to a wide range of opportunities for high quality CPD, including collaboration with other schools. Monitoring systems should be aimed primarily at recognising and sharing good practice.

**Moral Purpose:** We owe it to our students to be constantly striving to get better at what we do. Teachers and support staff who are working hard deserve to feel fully supported by leadership and trusted to carry out their roles to the best of their ability.

**Success Criteria:** Staff well-being surveys will record high levels of job satisfaction. There will be a healthy level of staff turnover, with colleagues generally leaving for positive reasons. The quality of teaching will have improved, as evidenced by lesson observations, learning walks, assessment checks and examination results.

### **Review (July 2016):**

Staff surveys clearly demonstrate that they are feeling more valued and that morale is significantly higher. For example, 93% said they enjoy working at the school and 96% said they are proud of the school when asked in February.

Staff turnover this year is, at around 10%, very healthy. Teachers are leaving either for well-deserved promotions, because they are re-locating to different areas of the country or – in a couple of cases – for retirement. Even more positive has been the strength of fields we have had when advertising and interviewing for replacements. Nationally, there is a genuine crisis in teacher recruitment, but we seem to have been immune to that this year; teachers clearly see Lymm High School as a very special place to work in again.

## Behaviour & Ethos

**Objective:** Behaviour is already a strength of the school, as is the pastoral care students receive. Relationships between students and staff are strong, major incidents (including bullying) are rare and the vast majority of lessons proceed without disruption. We are aiming to build upon this so that no lesson is affected by low-level misbehaviour, conduct on corridors and at break-times is consistently impeccable and every student is wearing our uniform correctly at all times. Furthermore, we want there to be a tangible ethos of aspiration and a thirst for learning amongst all students. Students displaying the behaviours we are looking for will be regularly recognised and rewarded.

**Moral Purpose:** Every young person deserves to learn in an environment that is free of distractions and where aspiration and ambition are the norm. Excellent behaviour is the foundation for any school's success. Students who consistently behave well deserve to be recognised.

**Success Criteria:** Behaviour logs, student and staff surveys will all record a decrease in the amount of low-level inappropriate behaviour. It will be very rare to come across a student not wearing uniform correctly. Our rewards system will be high-profile, consistently applied, effective and valued by students and parents. Above all, feedback from students, parents and staff will demonstrate that expectations have risen and that our young people are aiming higher than ever before.

**Review (July 2016):**

We have worked hard to reduce low-level misbehaviour in lessons and all the available evidence suggests we have been extremely successful. Systems have been simplified and tightened, with significantly more being expected of students and staff being encouraged and supported to address even the most minor issues. Student voice is unequivocal about the fact that behaviour has improved and 98% of staff said the same in the February survey. Despite what is now a very low threshold for an 'exit' being triggered, fewer than 2% of lessons see a student removed for behavioural reasons – and the new systems mean that, when this does happen, it takes place very quickly and without further disruption to the lesson. If we needed further evidence, it was provided by the experienced headteacher who spent most of the day in lessons a couple of weeks ago and who said "I didn't see anything other than behaviour that was great all day". Similarly, almost every parent I have shown around the school in recent months has, without being prompted, remarked on how calm and well-ordered it feels.

More recently, we have turned our attention to behaviour at social times and to uniform. Again, things are improving rapidly. As regards uniform, boys are leaving their shirts untucked far less frequently and girls are rarely breaking the rules regards make-up. Any issues we have at break and lunchtimes are overwhelmingly the result of children 'being children' and are resolved very quickly; it would be a shame to think young people are never allowed to be a little silly from time to time.

Crucially, we believe we have managed to bring about improvements in uniform and behaviour without unnecessary conflict. Indeed, we feel that the clarity of the systems we are now using and the manner in which staff are enforcing them, has hugely reduced conflict around the school. Students are much clearer about expectations and have responded superbly. The overall atmosphere is much improved.

The next step is to build on the excellent behaviour we have by doing more to reward the 'silent majority' who do the right things all of the time. The first step here has been the new rewards scheme introduced since Easter, which has been very positively received by students.

At the same time, we are trying to further develop a culture of academic aspiration; for example, introducing new KS3 exams and reporting percentage scores to parents is a move in this direction. In addition, for the first time we have been awarding certificates in assemblies this week to students who have gained excellent marks in end of year exams – publicly recognised academic attainment. We have concrete plans to better recognise students making excellent progress in their academic studies as we go forward.

## Extra-Curricular Activities

**Objective:** The extra-curricular programme is a real feature of Lymm High School already. There is a remarkable range of activities available to students, allowing them to take part to an extraordinarily high level in many cases. The number and range of trips available is fantastic, including many residential trips. However, not all students take full advantage of the opportunities on offer – and, sadly, this applies most to our students from disadvantaged backgrounds, even where activities are free or financial assistance is available. We want to change this.

**Moral Purpose:** Participation in extra-curricular activities is fundamentally important in helping young people develop vital skills such as teamwork, communication, resilience and responsibility. Every young person, regardless of their financial circumstances, deserves access to the full range of extra-curricular provision and we owe it to them to do everything we can to encourage them to take part.

**Success Criteria:** All students will be regularly taking part in at least one extra-curricular activity. Participation levels of disadvantaged students (defined, as a starting point, as those in receipt of Pupil Premium funding) will increase significantly relative to those of other students.

### **Review (July 2016):**

The Leadership Ladder was a major new initiative launched back in the autumn, and has exceeded our expectations in terms of how quickly it has taken hold. Well over a third of the school have already gained at least the Bronze awards, with many students even moving onto Silver and Gold already. As we expected, the older year groups were a little less keen to get involved immediately, but the popularity and importance of the Leadership Ladder will grow further as the younger year groups move through the school.

Critically, the number of disadvantaged students on the Leadership Ladder reflects the proportion of disadvantaged students in the school generally and, as a result of careful tracking and intervention by Heads of Year, is rising. We are very optimistic that, over the next couple of years, we can meet our objective of every single student taking part in at least something from the extra-curricular programme.

## Community Links

**Objective:** We want to ensure that the school remains at the very heart of the local community. We want to build on existing links with community groups, as well as create new ones, to benefit both the community and our students. In particular, students should be playing an active role in improving their own local community. We also want to maintain and develop links with partner primary schools as well as good relationships with other local secondary schools.

**Moral Purpose:** A large organisation like Lymm High School has a duty to play a role in serving the wider community in which it operates and encouraging our students to help will also help them to develop as decent, well-rounded citizens. Good relationships with other local schools can only benefit the educational provision of young people in the area.

**Success Criteria:** The range and number of links with community groups and organisations will increase. Students will be taking part in significantly more activities aimed at helping the local community.

**Review (July 2016):**

We have hugely increased the number of events we have put on for students from our partner primary schools this year and are a long way down the road to achieving our aim of seeing every partner primary student visiting Lymm High School at least 3 times even before they reach Year 6, so that they are better prepared for the move from primary to secondary when the time comes. We also continue to run a number of activities whereby students help out in the community – whether that be our musicians playing at the Rotary Club, the Halls raising money for local charities or students visiting the old people’s home at Christmas.

The recent internal creation of three ‘Heads of Ethos’ roles (taken by Ms Morris, Mr Hughes and Mr Hayes) will allow us to develop even more opportunities for students to play a positive role in the wider community. A starting point here is that Founders’ Day this term will be even bigger than last year; alongside the sponsored walk, various groups of students will be undertaking projects to help local organisations. This all forms part of our desire to ensure that students leave us as ‘socially responsible citizens and members of the community.’

## **Communication with Parents**

**Objective:** Parents and carers report high levels of overall satisfaction with the school, with the vast majority saying they would recommend it to other families. Generally, they also speak highly of the responses they get when they do need to contact school – with Student Services often getting mentioned positively in parent feedback. However, a significant minority feel that communication from the school could be better. We agree. For example, the website needs improving to better reflect the wishes and needs of parents. In time, we want to move towards a comprehensive Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) where parents and carers can readily access information relating to their child’s learning, progress and homework. An important part of this will involve designing an assessment and reporting system in response to government changes that parents value as accurate and clear.

**Moral Purpose:** As a school, we recognise that our obligation to provide excellent provision extends beyond the students themselves. Parents and carers are entitled to know what their children are doing at school, how well they are doing and how they can help them at home. This information should be easy to access and should not rely too heavily on the ability of teenagers themselves to readily communicate with their parents!



**Success Criteria:** Parental surveys will report a clear increase in satisfaction with levels of communication with the school. A VLE will be in place that matches the best provided by other schools.

**Review (July 2016):**

We have worked hard on improving communication this year and parents can read the results of the Parent Forum meeting held in April, including an action plan that was written as a result (an update on which will also be released this week). September will see the launch of a new website and an 'App' that will allow parents to more easily keep in touch with how students are getting on in school. There will also be a new reporting system in line with the abolition of National Curriculum levels, which we hope parents will find more intuitive and informative.

## Learning Environment

**Objective:** We are blessed with excellent facilities in many areas, including our sports fields, leisure centre, many of the main school buildings and Ty'n-y-Felin (our residential centre in Anglesey). Given that the financial climate over the next few years is unlikely to improve, large scale projects in this area are unlikely. However, we can do better with what we have got and there is work to do to make sure that all classrooms and public spaces are clean, vibrant and enriching; they should celebrate the successes of our young people and promote the high levels of aspiration and ambition that we are striving for. We also know that we need to do more to improve the ICT facilities, student toilets and the spaces in which students currently have to dine.

**Moral Purpose:** Every young person is entitled to a physical learning environment that, as an absolute minimum, is fit-for-purpose, clean and free of litter. At the same time, they are more likely to succeed if their surroundings reinforce and promote the values to which our school community aspires.

**Success Criteria:** Learning walks and site walks will show that all classrooms, corridors and other public spaces are clean and tidy, that displays clearly reflect our school's values and aspirations and are regularly updated to celebrate our students' successes. ICT facilities will have significantly improved, as will the state of the toilets and overall dining experience for all our students.

**Review (July 2016):**

A key priority as far as students (especially girls) were concerned last year was the state of the toilets. Better supervision and maintenance means that things are significantly better now – vandalism has been drastically reduced and they are generally being left in far better condition. Feedback from students (especially girls) has been very positive. We know that the boys toilets in E block are very old and these will be refurbished over the summer.

Our new ICT Facilities Manager (Mr Waslin) arrived last summer and has proved to be a fabulous appointment. The school had had major problems with ICT in previous years but these have been all but eliminated now (a few issues with the Apple Macs notwithstanding – and even these are reducing rapidly).

The relatively small size of our dining hall means that feeding all our students will always be a challenge. However, the catering staff (in conjunction with the student School Council) have worked exceptionally hard in the second half of the year to re-design the menu, queueing systems and areas where food is served. The impact is clear; queuing times have been significantly reduced and student feedback on the food available has been very positive.

Corridors and public spaces are much more consistently clean, bright and attractive and the next steps here are to ensure all classrooms are the same.

## School Finances

**Objective:** School budgets have come under severe pressure in the last couple of years and the financial climate over the next five years is almost certain to be even tougher. Like all schools, we are going to have to make some very difficult decisions and work harder than ever to protect the quality of provision for young people. Our objective here is to make sure that we are always planning ahead and being pro-active in looking for ways of doing things differently in order to avoid cutting some of those aspects of education that we most value. Part of this will involve trying to raise more money ourselves.

**Moral Purpose:** Prudent financial management is always central to the moral purpose of any school; we have a great responsibility to use public money in the most efficient way to provide the best possible experience for young people. Over the next few years, which are almost certain to see more substantial cuts in real terms to school budgets, this responsibility becomes more important than ever.

**Success Criteria:** Our budget will be balanced and stable and parents/students will not notice the impact of financial cuts. We will have been able to maintain our excellent extra-curricular provision in the arts, music and sport. We will be raising significantly more money from external sources, helping to fund projects that improve the experience of our students.

### **Review (July 2016):**

On the one hand, we are pleased to have a balanced budget for next year and to have managed the (very significant) cuts to school budgets in a way that has not impacted on provision for students. A huge amount of work has been involved in achieving this.

On the other hand, our efforts to raise money externally have not yet proved very successful and, given that it is absolutely plain that school budgets will come under even greater pressure in the next few years, a lot of work needs to be done in this area.