



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:

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| <i>Achievement for All</i> |
| <i>Excellent Teaching</i> |
| <i>An Inclusive School for All Abilities</i> |
| <i>Professional Learning Culture</i> |
| <i>Behaviour & 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 (May 2018):

Results in the summer will show just how much progress, but even using data from 2017 demonstrates that GCSE achievement is much higher than three years ago. For example, 83% students gained 9-4 grades in English and Maths (the best the school has ever achieved) compared to 69% the summer before this plan was written. This equates to over 40 additional students in each year gaining those all-important grades.

Our Progress 8 score of 0.10 last year shows we performed better than most schools, even taking into account our students' high starting points – and it would be a lot higher if we did not take such a strong stance on the need to ensure our curriculum suits the needs of our students rather than school league tables. Whilst not yet in the top 20% nationally, we are hopeful that this summer's results will mean we are not far away at all from meeting this objective.

At A' level, we have securely met the objective. 33% of grades in 2017 were at A*-A, 59% at A*-C and 85% at A*-C (figures in 2014 were, respectively, 24%, 47% and 72%.) Value added scores for the past two years have been significantly above average and in the top 15% nationally.

Next Steps (May 2018):

- * To build on improvements in GCSE progress to ensure we are in the top 15% of schools for the Progress 8 measure, even with our principled approach to the curriculum.
- * To maintain A' level progress rates, even as GCSE scores continue to improve (making it more difficult to demonstrate progress at A' level) and significantly improve outcomes for KS5 vocational courses
- * To ensure all key groups – especially disadvantaged students – are performing at least as well as other students

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 (May 2018):

There is considerably greater consistency in quality of teaching across the school now. Three years ago, it was not uncommon to see practice that was less than good, but this is now rare. Ofsted (Feb 2018) said: *“Because of your actions to improve teaching, pupils make consistently good progress almost everywhere in the school.”* Levels of challenge have increased, with all internal and external monitoring confirming a picture of students who are working harder and teachers who are expecting more of them. The “Take It Further” initiative that was introduced in September 2017 is helping to continue to drive levels of challenge and was also commented upon favourably by Ofsted.

One of the biggest sources of parental complaints three years ago was the lack of homework being set. The introduction of Show My Homework has been a great success and has helped to ensure huge progress has been made in this area. Internal monitoring is supported by parent voice saying that we are now setting appropriate homework regularly. (E.g. 91% of parents agreed that their child receives appropriate homework in 2018 compared to 68% at the time of the previous Ofsted inspection).

Assessment has also improved significantly. This includes marking of books, where the introduction of the FAR marking policy and more robust monitoring has ensured that books are now marked far more consistently than three years ago and students are receiving much more effective feedback. More broadly, the introduction of KS3 exams and the new KS3 assessment system have been well-received.

The driving force behind all of the above has been the introduction of an entirely new system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, involving leaders at all levels. Ofsted described a *“culture of thorough monitoring and evaluation that is underpinned by honesty and integrity.”*

Next Steps (May 2018):

- * Develop more outstanding practice across the school (increasing levels of challenge and engagement in particular), via a more coherent T&L strategy that is based on the latest research from cognitive psychology on how people learn. This will include the school-wide introduction of knowledge organisers, a more challenging, 'knowledge-based' curriculum at KS3 and a greater focus on teaching students how to revise.
- * Develop the school marking policy to allow more flexibility across subjects and therefore make feedback more effective
- * Continue to work on those niggling issues at the margins of homework (e.g. teachers not always remembering to post the relevant information on time) as well as ensuring that all homework is meaningful in terms of the learning it generates.

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 (May 2018):

Care of our students continues to be a strength, with the results of the 'ParentView' survey in February 2018 showing, for example, that 97% of parents say their child is happy at school, 97% saying they feel safe and 95% saying they are well looked after. Regular student voice activities confirm this, with Student Services in particular getting consistently excellent feedback about the way they look after our young people. Ofsted were full of praise for the school in this area too, saying, for example, that: "This is a school where everybody is accepted for their individuality and uniqueness". A local authority-led SEND review in December 2017 commented that "students at Lymm come first".

We launched the Scholars Programme in the autumn of 2016 and are pleased with the pace at which that has developed; a large number of trips and activities have already been organised for all year groups and feedback from students and staff has been positive.

Provision for SEND students has also improved, with the LA review in December 2017 making it clear that the school “provides extremely well thought out and largely effective SEN provision”.

Next Steps (May 2018):

- * Increase the numbers of students going on to Oxford and Cambridge and further develop the scale and quality of the Scholars Programme
- * Increase opportunities for more able students who are not on the Scholars Programme
- * Improve progress of SEND students so that it is consistently in line with that of other students. This will include the need to improve the quality of differentiation within lessons.

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 (May 2018):

Staff surveys clearly demonstrate that they are feeling valued and that morale is significantly higher. For example, 96% of teachers and 86% of support staff said they enjoy working at the school and 94% of teachers said they are proud to be a member of school when asked in the well-being survey May 2018. The results of the well-being survey overall were very positive, and show a vast improvement from three years ago.

Staff turnover has been around 10% over the past three years, which is a very healthy figure. Teachers generally only leave either for well-deserved promotions or because they are re-locating to different areas of the country. 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 relatively immune to that; teachers clearly see Lymm High School as a very special place to work in and we think this is a direct reflection of the work we have done to improve staff morale, as well as to provide high quality professional development for them.

Next Steps (May 2018):

- * Improve the quality of feedback provided to staff on how to improve their teaching
- * Improve quality of CPD such that levels of satisfaction with this are significantly higher. This will likely include a much greater focus on subject-specific CPD.
- * Greater collaboration with other schools on CPD with, including the possibility of the school looking to take on some kind of 'system leadership' role in this area over the next three years

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 (May 2018):

Behaviour is now outstanding. Since this plan was originally written, we have worked very 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 staff surveys say the same. 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 systems mean that, when this does happen, it takes place very quickly and without further disruption to the lesson. Ofsted commented upon the "extremely high standards of behaviour" in the school and that students "wear the uniform with pride".

We have also done a great deal of work to recognise and reward the 'silent majority' who do the right things all of the time. The rewards pyramid has been a huge success, with very high levels of engagement from students. Similarly, the introduction of the Gateway App has helped inform parents when their child has worked well in a particular lesson.

At the same time, we have made a good deal of progress in terms of developing a culture of academic aspiration. Twice-yearly KS3 exams have been introduced with percentage scores being reported to parents and certificates being awarded in assemblies to students who have gained excellent marks in these exams. Alongside the Scholars and Gateway programmes, the TIF initiative and improvements in teaching and learning, these things have all helped build a more aspirational culture whereby high achievement is something to be celebrated. Ofsted commented on the level of 'scholastic ambition' in the school.

Next Steps (May 2018):

- * Improve attendance rates, especially for disadvantaged students
- * Develop a more explicit culture of 'social responsibility' that students all understand, value and exemplify
- * Continue to ensure standards of behaviour are very high in all lessons – including, for example, those taken by external supply teachers
- * Develop the recent work on 'recognition' to ensure that every single student is regularly recognised for their achievements

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 (May 2018):

The Leadership Ladder was a major new initiative launched back in the autumn of 2016, and has exceeded our expectations in terms of how quickly it has taken hold. Nearly 75% of the school have already gained at least the Bronze awards (well over 80% in KS3), with many students moving onto Silver and Gold and small number even reaching Platinum. This reflects the progress we have made in encouraging more and more students to take part in the full life of the school.

Critically, the number of disadvantaged students on the Leadership Ladder is rising, as a result of careful tracking and intervention by Heads of Year (the gap is currently around just 10%). Similarly, we are very proud to be able to say that the proportion of disadvantaged students involved in at least one school trip in the last year has been the same as that of all students. The same applies to participation in at least one extra-curricular activity.

Next Steps (May 2018):

- * Develop STEM provision, especially for girls
- * Continue to work towards our ambitious objective of every single student taking part in at least something from the extra-curricular programme.
- * Develop careers provision – e.g. meeting the Gatsby benchmarks

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 (May 2018):

The school certainly seems to be playing a bigger role in the community again compared to three years ago. For example, we have: raised tens of thousands of pounds for local charities – including via a rejuvenated Founder's Day; run hugely successful joint performing arts productions with partner primary schools at the Parr Hall; run several events to support OAPs in the community; and supported many other community events with music and drama.

We continue to work well with our partner primary schools and are well on the way 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. This has included more work this year looking at the curriculum so that we now have a more secure understanding of what students are studying at primary level.

Finally, relationships with other secondary schools in the area are much more positive than they were and we have used these links to good effect in many areas, such as sharing good practice in teaching strategies and support for vulnerable students.

Review (May 2018):

- * Further develop curriculum links with partner primaries – for example, the ‘pupil passport’ idea
- * Continue to develop links with various community groups, including employers

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 (May 2018):

We have tried hard to overcome the challenges presented by us being such a large school and to improve communication with parents. We have overhauled the website and school newsletter to provide more information and made changes to progress reports as well as introducing the School Gateway app and Show My Homework. The evidence suggests we have had a good deal of success. For example, the Parent View survey

completed for the most recent Ofsted inspection showed 85% parents agreeing that the school responds well to any concerns they raise (compared to 65% at the time of the previous inspection) and 87% saying they receive valuable information about their child's progress (68% at previous inspection). This kind of pattern of improvement is supported by evidence from parent forum events, where parents tell us they are generally pleased with the level of communication they receive.

As regards a VLE, we have not made much progress here – but this is deliberate. We have always said we are not striving to be 'innovative' for the sake of it and are very happy to watch other schools trial different things, waiting until we have seen a model that we are confident will work well, quickly. As it happens, this area does not seem to have moved on quite as quickly as we expected it might do nationally when this plan was first written and so we are happy to continue to monitor what other schools are doing and wait until the time is right for us.

Next Steps (May 2018):

- * Re-design the sixth form website
- * Continue work to improve the quality of day-to-day communication so that parental satisfaction is even higher
- * Ensure 100% of parents are using the Gateway app and that we are using the app to maximum effect
- * Provide parents with more support to help their children with studies at home – especially revision for tests/exams

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 (May 2017):

A key priority as far as students (especially girls) were concerned when we first wrote this plan 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 overall. We also spent a good deal of money refurbishing the boys E block toilets, which were in a very poor state. That said, this is an area where we can still do better – the toilets are too often still being left in a poor state and students deserve better.

Our ICT Facilities Manager (Mr Waslin) arrived two years ago 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. The challenge now is to ensure sufficient investment going forward (see next section).

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 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 generally been very positive. Queues are still too long, but there is very little more we can do about this given the constraints of the building.

Corridors and public spaces are much more consistently clean, bright and attractive than they were.

Finally, we have been very successful over the past 2-3 years in winning bids for improvements to basic infrastructure – in particular roofs, boilers, fire alarm systems and drainage. A huge amount of work has gone into securing this funding and, whilst they might not be the most glamorous things to do, they are clearly essential.

Next Steps (May 2018):

- * Do everything we can to ensure a successful bid to the Football Foundation for a 3G pitch
- * Work even harder to ensure that toilets are always in an acceptable condition
- * Use displays around the school to more consistently reflect key messages of social responsibility
- * Try to secure funds for re-furbished PE changing rooms and better facilities for the performing arts

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 (May 2017):

There is no question that school finances are tighter than ever. As a school, we will have over £1.5million less in real terms to spend in 2018/19 than we did 3-4 years ago. On the one hand, we are delighted to have managed the cuts to school budgets in a way that has not significantly impacted upon provision for students – indeed outcomes have improved in almost all areas. On the other hand, there is no point in denying the fact that, unless the national picture changes significantly and quickly, more cuts will have to be made and quality of provision for students cannot be protected indefinitely. The financial situation also creates significant issues for managing staff workload/well-being and these will need to be tackled carefully.

Next Steps (May 2018):

- * Continue to work hard to try to secure additional funding from external sources
- * Develop contingency plans in the event that funding from central government does not improve