Research Schools Case Study Session 2022-2023

School Name: Kelso High School, Scottish Borders

Our Context: KHS is one of nine co-educational and non-denominational secondary schools in the Scottish Borders catering for students aged from 11-18. In May 2023 our school roll was 592, with our SIMD data ranging from 3-10 with the majority of our school cohort within 6 and 7. 46% of our young people have recognised Additional Support Needs. KHS has six local feeder primaries and together with Jedburgh Campus we make up the Cheviot Learning Community. KHS is led by a Senior Leadership Team comprising of the Headteacher and two Depute Headteachers. Our staffing consists of: 41.7 FTE Teaching Staff; seven Principal Teachers Curriculum, four FTE Pupil Support PTs and ten Additional Needs Assistants. Both teaching and support staff are committed and highly skilled with a wide range of experience. This allows staff to work collaboratively with and learn from each other to improve both learning and teaching as well as outcomes for our young people. In 2021 KHS was awarded Apple Distinguished School status – one of only ten schools across Scotland to have achieved this award and in June 2022 we were recognised not only as a Digital Schools Award Scotland School, but as having both the skills and the capacity to mentor and support other schools across Scotland to achieve this award. As a school we take 'pride' in the fact that our school values are 'lived not laminated' and our Vision, Values and Aims shape all the work we do in school. Our young people are at the centre of everything we do and at the heart of all improvement priorities. As a school and as an integral part of our wider community we strive to do our very best for each individual learner. We believe that Career Long Professional Learning is central to the success of KHS and pride ourselves on our positive approach to this at all levels. In 2018 we were awarded the GTCS Excellence in Professional Learning Award and we have a strong tradition of staff undertaking Practitioner Enquiries as part of their professional development. This has included working with Fearghal Kelly as part of the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL) initiative.

Identified priority, focus of research and intended outcomes for learners: When we initially applied to become a Research School at the end of Session 2022-2023 our identified priority was to Assure High Quality Learning, Teaching and Attainment - The Kelso Way through a whole school focus on 'Questioning'. This was seen as a natural progression from our 2021-2022 whole school Practitioner Enquiry focus on 'Feedback'. The intended outcomes for our young people were to: raise attainment; improve engagement; support our learners to overcome a fear of answering questions; lessen a young person's passivity in relation to answering questions; create a climate and culture within KHS classrooms whereby mistakes are regarded as learning opportunities and as part of the learning process. Staff were further encouraged as part of the planning for their Practitioner Enquiry to properly consider: the function of questions asked within their classrooms; to ask themselves whether considering the questions they asked was part of their planning process; how as teachers they

ensured that learners had sufficient background knowledge to answer the questions asked; how they ensured that the language used in their classrooms encouraged divergent thinking. Staff were also encouraged to consider ways in which within their classrooms questioning was used to: both extend and monitor thinking; reinforce and revisit learning intentions; maintain the flow of learning in lessons and importantly engage learners in thinking for themselves.

The Actions We Took – Focus One Questioning:

- Planned for a whole school launch of Research Schools and our session 2022-2023 LTA Focus on Questioning for August 2023 Inset.
- Set up a Channel dedicated to Research Schools on our Professional Learning Team to support staff throughout the Practitioner Enquiry Process and to ensure that all relevant documentation – Timeline / Baseline Audit Data / information pertaining to both Professional Learning Sessions and Optional Support Meetings / Suggested Readings – were easily accessible to all.
- Identified Whole School Enquiry Leads. A number of our Leads were staff who were keen to embrace whole school leadership opportunities as part of their professional development and as part of their journey towards a Middle Leadership role. Careful consideration was given to the composition of each group.
- Ran preparatory meetings for Enquiry Leads to ensure they felt supported in their role.
- Whole staff participation in Professional Learning Session One – 'What is Educational Research?' and in Professional Learning Session Two 'Practitioner Enquiry'.
- Created a KHS Research Schools Teaching and Learning Focus on Questioning Wakelet which collated various quality resources to support staff in their Enquiries: KHS Questioning Support 1: General Questioning Resources; KHS Questioning Support 2: collection of relevant resources from Lemov's 'Teach Like a Champion' ; KHS Questioning Support 3: collection of relevant resources from Sherrington's 'The Learning Rainforest'; KHS Questioning Support 4: collection of relevant resources from Chartered College of Teaching:; KHS Questioning Support 5: collection of relevant resources from Michael Chiles; KHS Questioning Support 6: collection of relevant resources from Kate Jones; KHS Questioning Support 7: collection of relevant resources from WalkThrus Volume 1 – cluster license was purchased to support this; KHS Questioning Support 8: collection of relevant resources from WalkThrus Volume 2; KHS Questioning Support 9: collection of relevant resources from WalkThrus Volume 3; KHS Questioning Support 10: collection of relevant resources from Rosenshine; KHS Questioning Support 11: collection of relevant resources pertaining to Bloom's Taxonomy.
- Adapted our KHS Lesson Observation sheet so that Questioning was included in the Assessment for Learning section - 'Questioning is skilled and enables higher order thinking' and to ensure that Lesson Observations by SLT, PTs and Peer CTs could be used as a means of supporting data gathering to inform Practitioner Enquiry foci.
- Purchased a number of additional texts for our Professional Reading Library to support the Practitioner Enquiry Process and the Learning and Teaching focus of Questioning and adding to a growing resource of materials accessible to all staff.
- Established a bidding process – Participatory Budgeting - by which individual staff could bid for funding to purchase resources to support aspects of their Professional Enquiry.

However, in the words of the great Scottish Bard, "The best laid schemes o'mice an'men gang aft a-gley' and indeed by November 2023, it was becoming evident that as a school we were experiencing increasing levels of post-Covid disengagement from a small number of young people. This was evidenced by:

- an increase in Demerits - quantitative data
- an increase in Behavioural Referrals - quantitative data
- a concerning impact on classroom environment and culture – qualitative data
- a concerning impact on engagement, attainment and achievement – qualitative / quantitative data
- a concerning impact on staff health and wellbeing - qualitative data

Anecdotally it felt as though '5% of our cohort were taking up 95% of staff time'. Some of these young people were completely disengaged from their learning to the point that they had become internal truants with Classroom Teacher / Principal Teacher Curriculum / Pastoral / Support for Learning / SLT / Parental / Other Agency interventions having little impact. It was at this point that concerns arose regarding the time being spent on the whole school Teaching and Learning focus of 'Questioning', when it was felt that a far more pertinent and relevant 'itch' at this moment was in developing and implementing more effective Behaviour Management and /or Improving our Positive Behaviour strategies. In January 2023 therefore, after consultation with Jenny Marr and Juliet Lunniss, the decision was made that Principal Teachers and SLT would form collaborative groups to push forward improvements

in relation to Improving Positive Behaviour, whilst Class Teachers would be given the choice to either remain working on the initial focus of 'Questioning' or change to the whole school more pertinent 'itch' of Improving Positive Behaviour.

The Actions We Took – Focus Two Improving Positive Behaviour – an Extended Leadership Team Approach

- Set up three short-term working groups with a member of SLT supporting each group. Principal Teachers were asked to join a group of their choice:

  1. Developing an Alternative Model/Timetable for Key Learners at KHS
  2. Improving Communication Around Behaviour Management in KHS
  3. Planning a More Consistent Approach to Behaviour Management across KHS at all levels

- Working Group 1 Developing an Alternative Model/Timetable for Key Learners at KHS met to create a Clarity Canvas – based on Simon Breakspear's 'Agile School Leadership' model and to establish the way ahead for their group. Four key questions were established: What are current issues/concerns in relation to our current curriculum meeting the needs of identified young people here at KHS? / What are Possible Solutions? / What is Needed to Support/Realise these Solutions? / What Impact Will We See and How Can This Impact Be Measured?

- Working Group 2 Improving Communication Around Behaviour Management in KHS met to create a Clarity Canvas – based on Simon Breakspear's 'Agile School Leadership' model and to establish the way ahead for their group. Four key questions were established: What are the current issues/concerns in relation to Behaviour Management and Communication around Behaviour Management here at KHS? / What are Possible Solutions? / What is Needed to Support/Realise these Solutions? / How Will We Know If We Are Having the Desired Impact?

- Working Group 3 Planning a More Consistent Approach to Behaviour Management across KHS at all levels met to create a Clarity Canvas – based on Simon Breakspear's 'Agile School Leadership' model – and to establish the way ahead for their group. Four key questions were established: What are the current issues/concerns in relation to Behaviour Management here at KHS? / What are Possible Solutions? / What is Needed to Support/Realise these Solutions? / How Will We Know If We Are Having the Desired Impact?

- Whole Staff Meeting to gather staff views on each of the key questions detailed above. Carousel activity whereby staff were able to both discuss with colleagues and individually respond to each of the key questions.

- SLT collated staff responses which were then shared with all staff.

- Working Groups met to discuss responses and to formulate a Rapid Action Plan – again based on Simon Breakspear's 'Agile School Leadership' framework/tool. Discussion and Action Around: 1. What are the next most important deliverables? 2. Responsibility – Who Will Take the Lead? / Who Else Will be Involved? 3. Timeline – What is the timeframe for delivery? 4. Resources – What resources, time and support will be needed? 5. Barriers – What could get in the way of successful completion? How will we work to minimise this impact?

- Throughout all actions detailed above, group members were engaging in professional research: professional reading; professional dialogue both within and outwith KHS; visiting other schools to see models of good practice in action; analysing and evaluating Behaviour Models and Strategies used within both Scottish schools and other schools worldwide; analysing and evaluating existing provision and data within KHS to support Improving Positive Behaviour.

- Purchase of key texts to support Research and Practitioner Enquiry process for KHS Staff Professional Reading Library.

Outcomes from Working Group 1 Developing an Alternative Model/Timetable for Key Learners at KHS:

- Increase in use of Build-Up Timetables for a number of young people as outlined in the SBC Inclusion Policy. Timetables agreed in discussion with both young person and parent/carer and reviewed by both Pastoral Staff and DHT on a regular basis.

- Appointment of Youth Workers to support delivery of Bespoke/Build-Up Timetables and to provide alternatives to existing curricular provision. 1:1 / 2:1 / Group Work Youth Worker activities to support delivery of our alternative curriculum have included: Developing Gardening Skills using our school garden (Dynamic Youth Award); Dry Stane Dyking (Dynamic Youth Award); Art Project at Floors Castle; Gardening Partnership in conjunction with Floors Castle; Cooking sessions: Gym sessions; Supporting young people with volunteering at a local primary school and with a local Golf Professional; Driving Range sessions: Bike Ability; Cookbook Project to support a local Foodbank; Supporting a Young Person on their Health and Safety Training delivered by the School Janitor in relation to using an electric lawnmower; Developing Skills in Pruning Trees and Plants within school grounds: Market Gardening Skills including Cost Analysis and Basic Bookkeeping; Supporting Delivery of High 5 Awards in Gardening and Golf.

- Working with our CLDS partners to organise and support Welding and Stone-Carving groups. Students at KHS have been learning new skills by working with a Stone Mason and a team of Archaeologists. Our 'Kelsae Archaeology Project' was profiled at the National Youth Work Conference to showcase the way in which CLDS by working in partnership with local providers can open up new learning pathways. Our young people will soon be sharing their newly discovered 'Kelsae' knowledge with residents at QME Care Home, Kelso. This project was funded by the Build Back Better Borders Fund. CLDS Partnership Work has also included an Inspirational Stone Carving Project with the residents of Kerfield Court. This exciting project involved a group of young people and Kerfield Court residents working with a local Stone Carver to learn how to design images and letters for carving on to stone. They have jointly agreed on form and are in the process of creating stone sculptures for the Residents' Garden at Kerfield Court. This project has been instrumental in helping to build intergenerational connections between KHS learners and our wider community.

- Implementation of our Inspiring Young Minds Project – working with CLD / SDS / DYW and external partners to support the 'No-One Left Behind' Programme. This six-week programme was targeted at S4 young people who were either non-attenders or at risk of leaving KHS without any qualifications. All provision was off-site and included significant family involvement. There was a family information evening at the beginning of the six-week project and family members were able to attend certain sessions to support their young people.

- Employed a Literacy/Numeracy Tutor to support a number of S4 Young People who were either non-attenders or at risk of leaving school without any qualifications. This tutor supported young people to achieve Level 4 and Level 5 qualifications in both Numeracy and Literacy.

- Introduction of Princes Trust provision into our curricular offer for S3. Run by Youth Worker and one of our Pupil Care and Support Team members. This provision targets new S3 learners who are at risk of disengaging from a traditional curricular offer. Units covered include: Personal Development; Project Based Learning; Teamwork Skills; Digital Skills; Managing Money; Wellbeing; Wellbeing and Healthy Eating; Wellbeing and Physical Activity; Community Impact; Sustainability; Undertaking an Enterprise Fault; Customer Experience; Experiencing the World of Work; Preparing for the World of Work; Presentation Skills.

Outcomes from Working Group 2 Improving Communication Around Behaviour Management in KHS:

- Production of Internal Truancy Policy – linked to KHS School Values and with our 'Why(s)' made explicit – and in accordance with SBC Inclusion Policy.

- Implementation of Turnaround Room with specific criteria around: purpose of room: staffing; recording, monitoring and analysis of learner use; clear and consistent expectations in relation to the use of digital technology and the use of departmentally provided resources to support learning within the room.

- Implementation of Turnaround Room Expectations and Responsibilities Flowchart – key document with clear and specific stepped actions in relation to Internal Truancy.

- In response to staff feedback improved communication via Emails / Teams / HT Weekly Update in relation to communication around Behaviour Management and Discipline Issues.

Outcomes from Working Group 3 Planning a More Consistent Approach to Behaviour Management across KHS:

- Introduction of additional demerit to existing Merit/Demerit system for repeated low-level disruptive behaviour and production of suggested template email to facilitate improved communication between school and home in relation to behavioural issues.

- Implementation of Staff Rota for Lunchtime Supervision of Stair Access Areas. This involved both teaching staff and non-teaching staff with our janitorial staff volunteering and contributing their own time to support.

- Focus on Positive Reinforcement – Rewards/ Merits / Certificates / Celebration Intervals.

- Discussions around trial of Showbie Behaviour Monitoring Card.

- Reinforcement of clear staff expectations in relation to: presence at doors during change of period to both Meet and Greet of young people and monitor corridor behaviour; consistent lesson structure.

- Implementation of Lunchtime Token system – linked to membership of extra-curricular/lunchtime support and study classes to facilitate restriction of unnecessary access to upper floors of KHS during both intervals and lunchtimes.

Overall Reflection One - Our Learning and Impact – The Practitioner Enquiry Foci on Improving Positive Behaviour

- Quantitative Data Analysis highlights a decrease in Pupil Care and Support Team Call Outs from week beginning 21/11/22 to week beginning 20/2/23.   There were 154 instances of Pupil Care and Support Team call outs in week beginning 21/11/22 compared to 59 instances of Pupil Care and Support Team call outs in week beginning 20/2/23 – a significant decrease.

- Quantitative Data analysis of Issue of Demerits highlights an overall decrease in the number of demerits issued in week beginning 21/11/22 compared to week beginning 22/5/23 in relation to our S1-S3 cohort:

Week Beginning 21/11/22		Week Beginning 22/5/23	
S1 BGE	17	S1 BGE	12
S2 BGE	56	S2 BGE	14
S3 BGE	71	S3 BGE	39

- Qualitative Data from staff, partners and young people highlights for the majority of learners on some form of bespoke or build-up timetable an increase in engagement, motivation and positive behaviour choices compared to previously.

- Our Inspiring Minds Project is currently being evaluated and reviewed. However, Qualitative Data from the Parents/Carers Review Meeting held on 31/5/23 is extremely positive – 'You are a window of hope to young people who don't fit into boxes – you give them a choice and a plan to follow' / 'This is the best thing that has come out of school education for my child'.

- The recruitment of a Literacy / Numeracy Tutor to work with targeted S4 students was successful with 83% of the targeted cohort achieving either a Level 4 or a Level 5 qualification in both Numeracy and Literacy.

- The Turnaround Room has seen a significant decrease in student referrals and usage as time has gone on highlighting that the number of young people missing class due to internal truancy has decreased:

  27/2/23: 16 instances of use
  17/3/23: 10 instances of use
  25/4/23: 3 instances of use
  27/4/23: 2 instances of use
  16/5/23: 1 instance of use
  18/5/23: 2 instances of use
  22/5/23: 2 instances of use

- Qualitative Data from staff highlights that staff report a decrease in the number of learners being above the ground floor of KHS without good reason at both intervals and lunchtimes.

- Working collaboratively on specific short-term foci following the tools and framework of Breakspear's 'Agile School Leadership' Model has been a powerful driver of positive school improvement here at Kelso High School. It has supported our Extended Leadership Team (SLT / Principal Teachers) to work collaboratively to implement and support targeted interventions with positive outcomes for young people and staff, as well as positive outcomes for school environment and culture. It is clear from both quantitative and qualitative data analysis that the majority of our young people have responded positively to the implementation of clearer systems and structures. Staff too have responded positively and report a feeling of empowerment at playing their part in the successful implementation of effective whole school systems and strategies.
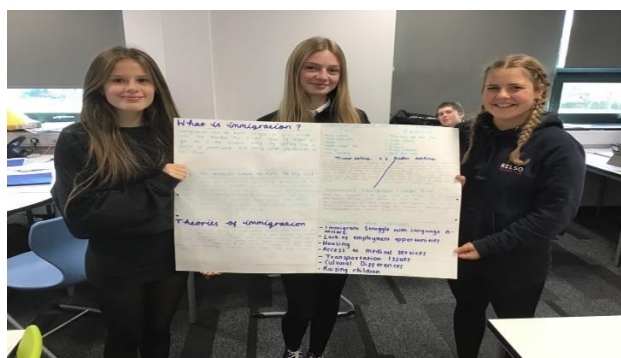
Overall Reflection Two - Our Learning and Impact – The Practitioner Enquiry Process and Research Schools Journey itself

- The decision to allow staff to choose whether to retain Questioning as their Practitioner Enquiry focus or whether to address their greater 'itch' in relation to Improving Positive Behaviour / Improving Behaviour Management was a 'nodal moment' for all involved in overseeing this Practitioner Enquiry process. It was evident that as our thinking around the Enquiry evolved, the direction of our journey towards school improvement shifted, but this was a necessary change of direction to address pertinent and specific issues.

- The short-term targeted focus of the collaborative Extended Leadership Team working groups highlighted the benefits of working in this manner. This tied in beautifully with the professional learning and development that SLT had undertaken in session 2021-2022 as part of their participation in Simon Breakspear's 'Agile School Leadership Programme'. Indeed our decision to shift our Practitioner Enquiry focus and address our pertinent itch allowed us to actively and successfully demonstrate the stated Learning Outcomes of the 'Agile School Leadership Programme':

    1. Apply Agile School Leadership frameworks and tools within our role
    2. Clarity our improvement priorities and pathways for impact
    3. Build momentum through taking responsive action
    4. Build confidence in working through cumulative cycles of collective learning
    5. Develop a clear and repeatable process for leading an iterative improvement journey that can adjust for the human dynamics of change in schools

- Both quantitative and qualitative Staff feedback from participation in this year's Enquiry Process has highlighted that although:

    1. 85% of staff respondents to the final SEIC Research Schools audit felt that 'My Research and Enquiry improved Outcomes for Young People
    2. 58% of staff felt that participation in their Research Schools Journey had made them a more confident practitioner
    3. 58% of staff felt that being a 'Research School' had supported setting improvement

Many staff reported feeling restricted by the initial whole school focus on one area. Staff reported strongly feeling the need for their Practitioner Enquiry focus to be relevant to them and to the young people in front of them. Staff also reported that a session long focus on a single Practitioner Enquiry means that the Enquiry itself often gets lost in whatever else is happening in the school year and that other things take priority. Staff, however, acknowledged that GTCS standards make clear that "all staff should have an enhanced and critical understanding of: Practitioner Enquiry as a stance in relation to their own professional learning… and a range of enquiry approaches, different data collection methods/tools, appropriate to the enquiry question/context' and that participation in the Practitioner Enquiry process is a key means of supporting staff professional development.

With the above in mind, SLT have therefore proposed a Change to the Practitioner Enquiry Process for Kelso High School in session 2023-2024.

Proposal

- Practitioner Enquiry to become a short six-week focus in Term 4 – beginning at the start of Study Leave
- Departments / Faculties to work collaboratively on a focus/key area specific to them. Option: if preferred staff could have the choice to work individually on a key area/focus, but this would be after discussion and agreement with PT.
- Key Area/ Focus / 'Itch' of Practitioner Enquiry would be identified in response to need identified through analysis of key Departmental / Faculty data from Terms 1 and 2.
- In relation to Practitioner Enquiry there would be agreed outcomes for young people across Department / Faculty.
- Practitioner Enquiry focus would inform Departmental / Faculty discussion at Faculty Meetings and professional dialogue following lesson observations during this time.
- Presentation of Practitioner Enquiry would be one single Faculty / Departmental response rather than an individual teacher response. Expectation, however, is that all staff would contribute.
- Funding would be available - bid application and plan required – to support Practitioner Enquiry process.

Why are we suggesting this new model?

- Allows for Departmental / Faculty autonomy
- Allows for specific Departmental / Faculty 'itches' to be targeted, explored and addressed with Faculty/Departmental staff ownership of the entire process
- Supports collaborative working
- Short term focus allows for targeted approach and supports successful completion
- Improves outcomes for both young people and staff in the areas of school life we are focused on improving

Next steps

- Celebrate our Practitioner Enquiry and Research Schools journey with staff at a Sharing and Celebration Event on 13/6/23.
- As part of our School Improvement Plan for session 2023-2024 continue to drive forward and embed positive and sustainable change with our Positive Behaviour Plans.
- Continue to utilise Breakspear's 'Cumulative Cycles of Collective Learning' in relation to all aspects of School Improvement including Practitioner Enquiry in session 2023-2024.
- Analyse feedback from Faculties in relation to proposed Change to the Practitioner Enquiry Process for Kelso High School in session 2023-2024.
- To review and plan next steps with partners in relation to the Inspiring Young Minds Project for session 2023-2024.