



January 24th 2008

Dear Colleague/Parent/Student,

### **Outcomes from BeauSandVer Quality Assurance Week: w/c 3rd December 2007**

The third Quality Assurance week across the consortium took place in the week beginning 3<sup>rd</sup> December 07. This is a distinctive feature of our consortium and demonstrates our determination to ensure outstanding provision and outcomes for all our sixth form students. Our thanks go to all those students and staff who took part in the Quality Assurance week.

The objective was to review consistency of provision across the consortium. The evidence base included:

- interviews with 30 students (all of whom have some lessons outside their home school) focussing on a **scrutiny of work (folders)**,
- the annual **questionnaire** (based on 21 statements) with 61 students
- **24 lesson observations** in six subjects taught across the consortium: Maths, Drama, Economics & Business, Photography, Music and Geography.

Individual feedback on the lessons and folders has been given to the teachers and students. We did nine more lesson observations than last year.

### **Findings**

**Questionnaire** feedback was generally positive but more negative comments were recorded than in the previous two years. The sample this year was skewed to Year 12 students so this may explain why they felt they were not well informed about what to do after they left school. Students were positive about the guidance going into the Sixth form, they felt they were treated fairly in other consortium schools and it was a friendly environment. They thought choice and course information was good. Tutors were seen as supportive. Significantly there was a negative opinion about the quality of teacher assessment that was stronger than last year's opinion. Information from other schools about their progress was also seen by roughly half the students as not good enough. Transport is still an issue, particularly where the slightly different timetables create pressure points.

As in previous years the quality of **folders** was mixed. The best folders were well organised, with dated notes and sections relating to different aspects of the course. They showed evidence of student engagement with the work through, for example, annotated notes and sheets and there was clear evidence of a variety of assessment by the teacher. Other folders were not organised in a way that could help revisiting or revising the topics. A large number of handouts from teachers were in evidence and it is unclear how much students really used them. Although there was some good practice, feedback from teachers was not consistent enough nor did it contain enough useful dialogue on how to improve. There does not appear to be any progress from last year's finding on folders and quality of teacher assessment. Student interviews also raised the issue of differing levels of prior subject knowledge possessed by students coming from different schools and the importance of teachers not assuming that students coming in from other consortium schools will have this prior knowledge. Note taking was another skill that was very unevenly developed among our students.

Findings from the **lesson observations** showed that most teaching is good. Of the 24 observed lessons 91% (93%) were judged to be satisfactory or better, 75% (86%) to be good or better and 25% were outstanding. Although there is no change in the overall judgment compared to last year there was one more unsatisfactory than last year (2 instead of 1) and more outstanding lessons were seen. The sample of lessons this year was increased by 50%.

**The best practice** included:

- High demands on students
- Excellent knowledge of subject and examination requirements shared effectively with students



- Exceptionally good use of resources, particularly IWBs or displays
- Very good independent working – more student led learning and less teacher dominated learning
- Active engagement in a variety of structured and effective activities e.g. competitive games, chanting key definitions
- Well organised folders that could be effectively used to enhance learning
- Well structured lessons with good pace
- Highly effective and challenging questioning, waiting for answers
- Excellent relationships between staff and students and between students
- Highly effective use of scaffolding to develop written argument.
- Six Hats thinking and other visual thinking aids for revision
- Peer assessment

#### **Areas of concern** included:

- Over didactic, little variety of active learning tasks
- Need for training in IB marking
- Knowledge of target minimum grade
- No clear lesson objectives, lack of structure and direction
- Not enough challenge
- If pupil based assessment need absolute clarity on criteria
- Lack of evidence of checking of folders and marking work

#### **Outcomes**

If we put together the student questionnaires, the work scrutiny and the lesson observations it clearly shows the need for future action to focus on:

1. improving consistency of assessment.
2. developing more interactive, engaging lessons, student led lessons where the teaching is currently over didactic
3. preparing students to become better independent learners e.g. note taking

### **Key Actions**

#### **1. Improve consistency of assessment by:**

- making this a main item on an upcoming consortium subject leaders meeting
- more use of Assessment for Learning (A4L) leading to quality comments letting the student know how to improve
- setting written subject targets every half term
- consider different models for 'tutorial' style lessons on a regular basis where teachers can have 10 to 15 minutes going over work one to one

#### **2. Develop more interactive, engaging lessons**

- Get subject teachers together across the consortium to work with outstanding teachers in that subject

#### **3. Prepare students to become better independent learners:**

- Training to Learn induction in September, consortium wide production of a pack for students e.g. good note taking , a working group to be set up, lesson activities to be devised for this to be taught at start of courses
- considering alternatives to loose leaf folders e.g. A4 size exercise books for some departments / students
- developing teaching strategies to ensure students interrogate their own notes and engage with them in learning.

We look forward to continuing to work together to ensure the highest standards of provision for students in our consortium.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Hitch  
Beaumont

Alan Gray  
Sandringham

David Kellaway  
Verulam