

SEND Governor Visit 18/6/26

Focus – Spaces within the school for children with SEND

I met with Lynley Benbetka. Our visit was a “walk and talk,” looking at different spaces outside the main classrooms.

This visit was planned to link with the current school focus on creating a more cohesive school environment and developing more effective spaces.

I saw that there are many demands on spaces outside of the classroom –

- Classroom interventions – for children working in a small group with an adult on a task linked to their classwork
- SEND Interventions – For children who need extra support who might be following a specific intervention programme, such as Attention Autism or following an adapted curriculum planned by the class teacher.
- Children working 1:1 with reading or maths volunteers
- Y5 and Y6 tutoring
- Sensory circuit space for children who need a more physical intervention
- A sensory space for children who need a calming time, either planned or due to dysregulation.

Spaces in the school are therefore at a premium.

The spaces

First, we looked at two small intervention rooms outside Y5 and Y6 which had previously been toilets. They were a suitable size for small groups. We noted some graffiti on the wall. I felt it was important to remove graffiti immediately so that others aren't tempted to add to it. Lynley said that would be the Site Service Officer's responsibility. How can incidents of graffiti and damage be dealt with more urgently? Is there a book to record issues? Who is responsible for ensuring that tasks have been completed?

We saw a table outside the Y5/Y6 classes. Lynley noted that she would prefer that volunteers and staff running class-based interventions used tables outside classrooms, leaving the quieter rooms for SEND interventions.

Lynley noted that the hall or the tables outside are used for interventions when available/weather is appropriate.

Lynley explained that once regular interventions were in place, timetabling was effective, but if something out of the routine took place, children and adults might spend some time wandering to find an alternative space.

Lynley was concerned that children who needed Sensory Circuits did not have an allotted inside space for this intervention. Her idea had been to cover some of the green space next to the hall, but others resist this loss of green space.

We noted that there was dead space behind the Qube, blocked by a shed. In the longer term, we thought that a plan to open up this area would be excellent.

We looked at the Qube which is a relatively big space, with two small rooms and a larger one. We both felt that all three rooms were not being used to their greatest potential. There are pieces of broken or discarded furniture in the Qube, lots of bulky music stands and many brass instruments that children aren't taking home for practice.

As we moved around looking at spaces, we discussed the lack of funding and the importance of carrying out practical improvements that wouldn't take much money and could be done quickly whilst waiting for funding.

Lynley noted that there were 3 INSET days at the beginning of next term. Lynley intends to come in a day earlier to start clearing out the Qube, but would it also be possible to use one of those days to sort out the Qube and to refresh other areas. If a skip was hired, broken and outdated furniture could be removed. Lynley would like to approach the PTA for money for some new storage units, and possibly screens and blinds, to improve the Qube and other spaces.

Lynley suggested that the school could possibly move the costumes out of the costume shed and under the stairs, and move the brass instruments and music stands into the costume shed. Although we didn't discuss this thoroughly at the time, I wonder if it is possible to swap from instruments so that children have instruments that are more practical to take home? Also, now I wonder in retrospect, would it be better to consider small group lessons for the children who really want to continue to learn for another year and a class music lesson for those who don't. Many children may not enjoy bass instrument playing or do any practice.

The Library

This is used for reading interventions and there is a proposal to possibly open it out into the area where the pond is.

The School Keeper's house

The school is waiting to hear whether they will get a grant to develop the house into KS1 toilets, a class kitchen for children's cookery lessons and some more spaces for group work.

I shared my experience of Hawley's house which is a similar ex-domestic property which is now part of the school site. We had small group rooms, a music room and a kitchen and there were some issues with all three. It was hard for adults to use the rooms with the more challenging children – they were a bit far from the main school and if children were being dysregulated, staff did not want to be alone in the house with them. If one child in a group was being uncooperative, it was hard to send them back to class. The music room wasn't quite big enough for whole class lessons and male music teachers, in particular, were wary of delivering individual lessons in an isolated space. The kitchen worked well for groups when it was possible for one adult to be given the time and responsibility to ensure that dishwashers were emptied etc and that the kitchen was deep cleaned weekly. Most children were too short to use cookers safely. We bought induction hobs to put on classroom tables – and in the end teachers moved those hobs and equipment into classrooms when they were cooking.

At Hawley, we were starting to think that it would be better to use the house for parent groups and a teacher's PPA room and to turn our PPA room into a space for working with children.

The Pod

This has a sensory space which is very calming and works well for some children. Children are timetabled in for sessions, but can also be brought to the pod if they are dysregulated.

Some equipment is stored in cupboards in this sensory space, which makes it inaccessible when the sensory space is in use.

The other part of the pod is used for after school tutoring and for more adult based activities – parent's meetings, meetings with health professionals such as the OT, coffee mornings etc.

I noted that there had been scribble on the wall in there for some time, which wasn't acceptable. Lynley said that the walls in the pod are being painted at the moment as part of a Y6 project. We also saw that some of the paint in the Sensory pod had been picked away – again, could damage in rooms be dealt with more rapidly? It is harder for shared areas to be kept tidy without people being allocated that responsibility. Maybe if a day at the start of the year is set aside to tidy areas at the beginning of term, specific responsibilities for certain areas could also be allocated to staff on that day. Children could also take on roles, for example, litter monitors, monitors to tidy away playground equipment, tables outside classes etc.

The Outdoor spaces

The Forest school area and the pond are lovely calming areas for small groups/individual children, when they are not in use by classes.

By the end of the visit, we both felt that there were some quick fixes to be made, particularly in the Qube.

A huge thank you to Lynley for spending some of her very precious time to walk around the site, and for sharing her thoughts and ideas.