

The Learning Quality Framework



Landau Forte College, Derby

Report of the Assessment conducted against the Gold Level Indicators
on 26th November 2014

Assessor

Steve Watson

Executive Summary

The first Landau Forte accreditation visit took place on the 12th and 13th of June 2014 against the Gold Level Indicators of the Learning Quality Framework, the outcome of which was a deferral. The recommendations at the time were:

“The objectives of the assessment were partially met and, given the strength of the evidence available, the assessor recommends to the Awarding Body that the Gold Level of the LQF Award be deferred pending the College undertaking further work on the nature of progression (principle 11) in the development of key learning behaviours.

However it should be noted that the College has successfully met the majority of assessment points at the Gold level. The deferral is proposed solely to give the College time to explore the nature of progression in learning behaviours and, critically, consider how these emerging understandings will feed back into other areas of the quality framework.”

At the subsequent visit on 26th November 2014, the issues around progression identified above were explored, and interviews with Governors and Parents that were not undertaken in June were also completed.

The initial assessment visit in June involved:

1. interviews with senior and middle leaders and with tutors;
2. a tour of the College to view the 'learning environment';
3. session observations in years 7 through 10 to examine practitioners' orchestration of learning and to talk to students about their learning;
4. conversations with individual students from the observed sessions;
5. conversations with practitioners from the observed sessions;
6. a meeting with student learning coaches;
7. scrutiny of documentary evidence;
8. a closing session with senior leaders to triangulate and agree outcomes.

On the 26th November, the visit involved:

1. a tour of the College to view the College's work on progression;
2. session observations in years 7 through 10 to examine practitioners' orchestration of progression in learning and to talk to students about this;
3. conversations with practitioners from the observed sessions;
4. a meeting with student learning coaches who helped to develop the College's 'Learning Lines';
5. a meeting with some Governors and some parents;
6. scrutiny of documentary evidence;

Recommendation

The objectives of the assessment were fully met and, given the strength of the evidence available, the assessor recommends to the Awarding Body that the Gold Level of the LQF Award be awarded.

Steve Watson, 29/11/14.

Aspect 1: Commitment - The College is committed to using the learning sciences to develop its peoples' learning dispositions, and equip itself as a learning organisation.

Principle 1 - Vision for Learning:

The College has an engaging vision for 21st Century education based on social, economic, moral and personal learning imperatives that guides the College and its community:

Senior leaders can explain the core values of learner empowerment with conviction and clarity, how they have developed over the lifetime of the College, how these are woven into the vision and aims of the College, and can give examples of the various ways that have been used to spread this vision. Senior leaders talk of 'daring to be different' and recognise the need to support their vision for independent, autonomous learners with appropriate structures at whole-College level. The College principal believes that if she 'takes care of learning, then everything else will take care of itself'. Tutors can describe and give examples to show how 'how we do things round here' has evolved. They feel that 'learning runs through the place' and that the longer working day affords many opportunities to deliver the vision of 'becoming world class'. One tutor commented that 'there is a shared vision, we are all part of the big picture, and we are all keen for it to continue getting better'.

Students comment that 'Landau Forte is meant to be different' and believe that the careful use of language denotes and emphasises this difference. They believe that 'the College is interested in us as lifelong learners and invest in helping us to reach our maximum potential'.

Governors talk with great understanding and support for the College's learning agenda – 'what we are aiming for is a profound understanding of learning behaviours'. They consider it to be their job to 'keep true to the principal of creating effective learners', and that they aim for better education, not just better results.

Parents demonstrate understanding and support for the College's approach to developing learning behaviours and the College's adopted language for learning. They view the College as 'a learning environment'

There is supporting documentary evidence, but as is noted elsewhere in this report, the College places a greater emphasis on living the vision rather than capturing it in policy. That said, the College might wish to consider whether it needs to review such documents in order to ensure that they reflect how Landau Forte is intentionally unique and different and to drive further developments.

- **Senior leaders talk of 'daring to be different'**
- **'Learning runs through the place'**
- **'There is a shared vision, we are all part of the big picture, and we are all keen for it to continue getting better'**
- **'What we are aiming for is a profound understanding of learning behaviours'**

Principle 2 - Learning Framework:

The College has adopted a coherent approach to building traits that affect how people go about learning based on Building Learning Power, and this drives learning in the College and its community.

Senior and middle leaders can explain the rationale and validity of the framework, which exists in written form as the Effective Learning at LF College document. As noted in principle 1, the framework may need to be re-visited and updated once the College's fascinating work on progression has become fully mature and embedded. Nonetheless, during interviews, there was general agreement about and commitment to the College's view of learning.

A cross section of tutors can give examples of when and why they have re-examined their thinking in the light of the College's learning aspirations, and how this has changed their practice. They talk of a 'shift in focus from teaching to learning', of a move away from 'students expecting College to do it for them', and a 'growing awareness of the *how* of learning'. One commented on a significant cultural shift from their previous school.

- **There is general agreement about and commitment to the College's view of learning.**
- **Tutors talk of a 'shift in focus from teaching to learning'**
- **Outcomes from the College's work on progression may require policy updates in the future.**

Principle 3 – Language for Learning:

The College has adopted a rich language of learning recognising its emotional, cognitive, social and strategic dimensions, and this language permeates learning across the College and its community.

The College's language for learning is derived from Building Learning Power. The language is used with fluency by senior and middle leaders, and by tutors. Tutors talk of an awareness of the language being 'part of the expectation' and feel that they are increasingly 'getting beyond the 17 words'. They mention students 'staying behind to discuss the learning process' and mention the frequency of learning conversations in tutor time.

Students comment on how they are introduced to the language for learning initially during tutor time, how their student guide further supports this, and how the language is used in subject sessions. They are able to explain what good learners do using the College's adopted language. Some can use the language of learning to explain how they have become better learners.

The common language is visible in display around the College, and in particular in public circulation spaces where the College has chosen to display its understanding of progression, which they call 'Learning Lines'. The Learning Lines were created by tutors in consultation with students, and have dramatically lifted understanding of BLP's 17 learning behaviours.

Tutors found that the work on progression has led to a deeper understanding of learning – as one tutor said: 'Now I get it!'

Students are better able to discuss the subtleties of the process of learning than was previously the case, and conversation now focuses on how *well* a behaviour is being used (rather than how *often*, as it was in June). This is not to say that all students are fluent in the language being drawn from the Learning Lines, but all students spoken to both at interview and informally were able to describe the Learning Lines and how they were using them to grow their understanding of themselves as learners.

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- **Students are able to explain what good learners do using the College's adopted language. Some can use the language of learning to explain how they have become better learners.**
- **The common language is visible in particular in public circulation spaces where the College has chosen to display its understanding of progression, called 'Learning Lines'**
- **Conversation focuses on how *well* a behaviour is being used**
- **Students are able to describe the Learning Lines and how they are using them to grow their understanding of themselves as learners.**

Aspect 2: Plans and strategies. Leadership approaches, plans and strategies are aligned to enhance learning development across the College and its students.

**Principle 4 - Leadership of Innovation and Learning:
Leadership for learning throughout the College supports innovation, experimentation and risk taking, building individual independence and responsibility.**

A culture of experimentation and risk taking is evident in the College: senior and middle leaders explain how this has been achieved and can give examples of such experiments; tutors can describe the ways in which they feel they have been empowered to take risks, and describe with enthusiasm risks that they have taken and how this has impacted on their practice, provision and outcomes for learners. They talk of a 'permission culture' within which experimentation flourishes and new approaches can be developed and refined.

College teams are self-evaluative in terms of the quality of teaching and learning and have plans in place to make further improvements. The College can describe a range of formal and informal monitoring procedures, from Performance Management, which supports the spread and development of the College's vision for learning, to external learning reviews, and learning walks conducted by senior staff accompanied by student learning coaches.

Students, and in particular the learning coaches who have received training in giving feedback to tutors, value the opportunities that they are afforded to contribute to the dialogue about learning, and believe that their views are sought, considered and acted on by tutors and by the College in general.

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Principle 5 – CPD Policy and Strategy:

The College’s CPD policy and strategy stimulates and supports a community of enquiry and research in the promotion of effective learning habits for all.

The CPD leader can illustrate how CPD provision links to College and team improvement plans, to performance management cycles that focus on developing learner independence and is able to evidence the positive impact of CPD policy and practice on the development of teaching and learning. The College can show evidence of a sustained CPD programme that supports the development of a learning focus and culture.

The College can show how it has resourced and supported professional learning communities and can give examples of scope and evidence of how this is impacting on practice. Tutors value the opportunity to work in this way and believe that the learning triads are ‘making a difference’. They comment on the importance of cross-subject groupings in order to gain new perspectives, on the perception that they are becoming less prescriptive, thus enabling them to develop and explore their own areas of interest. They feel that the balance of top-down direction and the opportunity to pursue their own areas of interest is about right. One tutor commented that ‘leadership trust PLCs to develop’. Formal events like the tutor learning fair further emphasise the importance of such small-scale enquiries.

The College has engaged external support to support the development of coaching, and the impact of this is evident in staff interactions, in tutor/learner exchanges during sessions, informally around the College, and in the training programmes for student learning coaches.

Key staff and students are trained in and conduct learning reviews across the College to gather quantitative and qualitative data on how students are learning, and additionally the College has invested in a number of external reviews of learning in recent years.

- **Tutors value the opportunity to work in triads and believe that the learning triads are ‘making a difference’**
- **‘Leadership trust PLCs to develop’**
- **The College can show evidence of a sustained CPD programme that supports the development of a learning focus and culture**

Aspect 3: Action – Learning opportunities within and beyond the College build, broaden and strengthen people’s effective learning habits for lifelong learning

Principle 6 - Curriculum:

The curriculum is effective in cultivating and progressing a set of generic learning habits and attitudes.

A broad cross section of teachers can explain how the coverage of learning skills and attitudes are being implemented. The College has a highly developed, innovative curriculum model, supported by curriculum plans that have mapped/linked learning habits across all aspects of the curriculum.

Work on progression is leading the College to consider the need to differentiate both the content and the learning process in order to ensure progress at the individual level. The LQF framework anticipated at this stage that the College would begin to map aspects of progression drawn from the Learning Lines on to their curriculum plans, rather than simply attaching capacities like Noticing and Collaborating. The College has decided not to do this, but rather to agree learning targets, drawn from the Learning Lines, with *individual* students. It would appear that this approach might well be more powerful than the one envisaged in the LQF.

College routines, including enrichment activities such as the ArtScience Prize are used purposefully to develop dimensions of learning habits that are more difficult to attain through learning space activities. The College has analysed the particular habits that are being developed through College routines and real settings.

- **The College has a highly developed, innovative curriculum model, supported by curriculum plans that have mapped/linked learning habits across all aspects of the curriculum.**
- **Work on progression is leading the College to consider the need to differentiate both the content and the learning process in order to ensure progress at the individual level.**

Principle 7 – Teaching Methodologies:

Learning opportunities intrigue and motivate learners, develop effective learning habits and enhance content acquisition.

Learning behaviours are introduced to students during induction, and further developed during tutor time. While this was not observed during the visit, students confirm that this happens and that the value the insights it affords into the process of learning. Planned opportunities for students to develop and progress their learning habits are in evidence in tutor guides and mirrored in corresponding student guides.

In June, these learning behaviours were sometimes neglected at the point of delivery. There were relatively few explicit references to the learning behaviours that had been identified in the tutor guides - split screen planning that was not being translated into split-screen delivery. As a consequence, learning behaviours were operating beneath the surface of the learning, rather than explicitly being employed to drive the content acquisition forward. It was fascinating to observe in November how the fine grain behaviours identified on the Learning Lines are now in frequent use in learning spaces (classrooms), by both students and tutors. The Learning Lines have refreshed the College's interest in learning and the process of learning is now more evident in delivery. Students mention how tutors make extensive reference to the Learning Lines in learning sessions (lessons).

Feedback on both content and learning skill development is more frequent now than was the case in June, although this is based on a small sample of observations. Students confirm that tutor language has become richer and subtler due to tutors using the language from the Learning Lines. One student commented that 'without these discussions you are not going to improve'

Most staff can give illustrations of how they display themselves as lifelong learners, and a corridor display from a tutor learning fair further displays ongoing development to tutors and students alike.

- **Planned opportunities for students to develop and progress their learning habits are in evidence in tutor guides and mirrored in corresponding student guides.**
- **Tutors make extensive reference to the Learning Lines in learning sessions**
- **'Without these discussions [about the Learning Lines] you are not going to improve'**

Principle 8 – The Learning Environment:

The Learning Environment is used constructively to promote positive learning behaviours and reinforce messages about the nature of learning.

The culture of most learning spaces reflects and embraces a speculative approach to all aspects of learning and development. In Science, for example, students were observed planning how to conduct an experiment, supported by teacher questioning/prompting that nudged them to explore possibilities for themselves. Students experienced challenging learning opportunities in over half of the observed sessions, and were enabled to select their own level of challenge in Spanish. At interview, students understood that worthwhile learning is a challenging, uncertain and risky process.

The College demonstrates that it values effort and resilience through teaching routines, assessment and reporting structures. A growth mindset/can-do culture is evident in the College, as exemplified by a learning conversation observed at tutor time.

Active, collaborative learning is the prevailing culture in most learning opportunities, with learning is viewed as a shared, co-constructed endeavour. In Music, year 7 students were assigned roles prior to undertaking a group task, and more generally tutor time encourages the full range of collaborative learning behaviours.

Display in public areas and in learning spaces balance the focus on both curriculum content and learning behaviours. The Learning Lines that are currently in public circulation areas will, in time, also permeate the learning spaces – perhaps the ‘washing lines’ in many learning spaces could be used to showcase particular Learning Lines ?

- **A growth mindset/can-do culture is evident in the College**
- **Students understand that worthwhile learning is a challenging, uncertain and risky process**
- **Active, collaborative learning is the prevailing culture**
- **Display in public areas and in learning spaces balance the focus on both curriculum content and learning behaviours.**

Principle 9 – Learner Engagement:

Young people actively co-participate in the design, management and evaluation of learning and contribute to the powerful learning culture.

Students act as a sounding board to provide learner insights and evidence of their experience of learning to learn and their growth as independent learners. These insights are used to inform the development of learning. Students are offered the opportunity to co-design and co-deliver aspects of learning, they relish the many opportunities they are offered to be the designers of their own learning across the curriculum, and can cite numerous occasions when this happens (for example during tutor time). They feel able to email the Student Council, the Principal or individual tutors about learning matters, and tutors often seek feedback from them on their sessions.

Learner engagement through their participation in the Student Council and its subgroups is exemplary. It is underpinned by the Student Learning Coaches programme and the knock-on impact on learner engagement in sessions is evident. Students of all ages feel that they are consulted on learning matters and believe that their feedback is both valued and acted upon. There is extensive documentary evidence to illustrate how the College systematically supports and nourishes this aspect of College life.

- **Learner engagement is exemplary.**
- **Students of all ages feel that they are consulted on learning matters and believe that their feedback is both valued and acted upon.**

Principle 10 – Parents and Community:

The College works in partnership with parents and carers to develop learning dispositions.

The College makes parents and carers aware of the College's learning framework in a variety of ways and offers support, guidance and examples of how parents can support the development of learning habits at home. Parents are kept informed effectively of their child's progress in the development of learning habits and development work within the College, and the views of the parents and Governors are sought and used to inform learning developments across the College.

Parents talk of how reports recognise and celebrate their child's growth as learner and appreciate the target setting process that is integrated with it. They mention the opportunities to meet staff face to face to discuss learning progress (in addition to content progress). A recent questionnaire is considered indicative that the College is listening to parents, and the website is viewed as an excellent source of learning information.

- **Parents talk of how reports recognise and celebrate their child's growth as learner and appreciate the target setting process that is integrated with it.**
- **The College is listening to parents**

Aspect 4: Keeping learning on track: The College, its people, its students and its community understand the impact on the investment in growing learning habits.

Principle 11 – Tracking Strategies:

Tracking and authenticating the growth of learning dispositions (with regard to when, where and how well they are used) builds learners' motivation and informs learning design.

The College has a variety of formative methods of assessing, recording and reporting progression in learning habits and has developed a broad map of progression in the development of learning dispositions in line with its framework for learning – these are expressed as Learning Lines, currently displayed in public circulation areas.

The College's assessment recording and reporting system for progression in learning habits includes student's perceptual data and objective evidence of staff.

Students are encouraged to record and reflect on their progression in learning habits and set personal targets for improvement. Students across the College understand and record their growth in learning habits in terms of frequency, depth and breadth.

Students who worked with tutors to develop the College's Learning Lines report the insights that the process afforded them, and it is these students who led the introduction of the lines to the rest of the College.

Students across the College mention how they use the Learning Lines *for themselves* – as reminders of what the behaviours mean; so that they can see where they are; as a means of prioritising what they need to improve on. They also mention tutors referring to the Learning Lines in learning sessions. As a consequence, students are increasingly able to set their own targets for learning development, targets that are tightly focused and drawn from the Learning Lines.

The impact of the College's work on Learning Lines has been to move the conversation beyond *how often* particular habits are exercised, to *how well* they are being stretched.

Curriculum progress is graded as good by Raise Online / Ofsted.

- **Senior leaders, tutors and students recognise the importance of the Learning Lines**
- **Students are increasingly able to set their own targets for learning development**
- **Conversation has moved beyond *how often* particular habits are exercised, to *how well* they are being stretched**

**Principle 12 – Evaluation Strategies:
A monitored set of organisational learning indicators guide continual improvement in provision, practice and the achievement of objectives.**

Consultation with all practitioners is extensive and College leaders, through listening carefully to feedback, know their College well. There is an ongoing commitment to sharing best practice through both formal and informal means, and this sustains a culture of experimentation and innovation.

The College improvement plan indicates that the College monitors performance across a wide range of indicators relating to all aspects of development.

The College, as an organisation, displays the learning characteristics that it seeks to build in its students – it pursues its goals with tenacity and attention to detail; it approaches its own growth with an appetite of enquiry and curiosity, is inventive and flexible yet rigorous, seeks novel ways to link things together for greater effect and exploit the possibilities that exist; it behaves as a community of enquiry, explorative, attentive to others, willing to adopt best practice and capable of going it alone when necessary; it is reflective, thoughtful, strategic and evaluative.

The College, as a community, is learning its way forward together, and the very strong sense of ‘shared endeavour’ is evident at all levels. One teacher commented that ‘the College is a learning community that learns its way forward together’ and another that ‘we are on a learning journey, we are still learning about learning’.

- **College leaders, through listening carefully to feedback, know their College well.**
- **The College, as an organisation, displays the learning characteristics that it seeks to build in its students**
- **The College, as a community, is learning its way forward together, and the very strong sense of ‘shared endeavour’ is evident at all levels**

Continuous Improvement.

In line with the College's journey to excellence, the following development points are offered as ideas for further enhancing practice:

- Continue to explore the nature of progression in terms of learning behaviours and construct Learning Lines for further learning behaviours as necessary;
- Consider the implications of the Learning Lines for a range of policies;
- Continue to review tutor and student guides in the light of the College's Learning Lines to ensure that *all* focus on how well, rather than how often, the learning behaviours are being stretched;
- Work with TLO to begin to define the Platinum Standard of the LQF.