

## Audit of VI Provision at Belmont Academy - DRAFT

Findings of visit on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021

### **1 Scope**

To carry out an audit of the VI provision at Belmont Academy, with particular reference to environmental and social aspects, using the VI Quality Standards. I spent a day in the school, talking to the QTVI, SENCO, Executive Headteacher, VITAs, class teachers and lunchtime supervisors.

### **2 Background**

Belmont Academy in Bexleyheath is a small primary school with two form entry. There has been a VI provision on site for over 20 years. It is led by a QTVI with over 5 years' experience and is very well supported by the SENCO, senior management, and governors.

There are currently two students in the Centre.

A boy in year 6 with albinism and nystagmus, who described his support as "absolutely perfect". He has been trained to use technology to access his learning as a font 36 user. He stated that he is very happy in school: he has friends, is included, and everyone looks out for him.

A girl in year 1 with only light perception, and other additional needs, currently under further treatment for a brain tumour, which was the cause of her sight loss. This student told me that "everything is good" and she has "so many friends" naming them all. She is learning braille and currently uses a Perkins and Mountbatton brailier. Resources are adapted for her daily after planning with the class teacher

### **3 Resources**

This is a well-resourced provision, with its own room, which has been able to build up appropriate VI equipment and tactile resources, such as Mountbatton brailiers, maths shapes, adapted books and reading schemes, braille lego, iPads, appropriate software and PE equipment. There is an experienced VITA who produces resources three mornings a week, in liaison with the QTVI and class teachers, and each student has a dedicated VITA in lessons. The QTVI also provides up to 6 hours per week with each student to teach braille, mobility and the supplementary VI Curriculum. The school is fortunate that the QTVI is also a qualified Habilitation specialist. Midday Supervisors provide cover during the lunch break.

### **4 VI Quality Standards**

#### Outcomes for CYPs with a VI

*QS 1 An inclusive school environment: the culture, ethos and environment of the school promotes the inclusion and achievement of CYPs with a VI and this is fully reflected in the school's policies and plans, specifically with the School Equality Scheme.*

**Requirements:**

	Indicators	Evidence
<p><i>The whole school fosters a positive attitude to VI</i></p> <p><b>Status:</b> <b>Achieved</b></p>	<p>Training</p>	<p>The whole school is given a refresher VI training session during an INSET once per year.</p> <p>During induction, new staff (classroom teachers, VITAs) are given specific teaching by the QTVI, going into more detail about equipment, and the impact of students' eye conditions. A VITA also described the training as "drip feeding where necessary" and found this approach very practical and helpful.</p> <p>VITAs are learning braille alongside the student, using the UEB on-line course, and are proficient in working with specific VI technology.</p> <p>Midday supervisors also receive training at end of their lunch shift (there is no dedicated 1-2-1, so all need to be aware on KS1 and KS2 playgrounds). I was told this training is refreshed regularly and was "empowering", giving the midday supervisors strategies to keep the VI students safe, and teaching games such as Kingball which they could introduce to the children.</p> <p>There is also peer awareness training in groups of six to students in both year groups where there is a VI student, and also to those KS 1 and KS2 students sharing a playground.</p> <p>The QTVI also attends relevant courses eg Lego training.</p> <p>Daily liaison with all staff by QTVI</p> <p>All staff working with a VI student have a specific inclusion target embedded in their Performance Management</p>
	<p>Website</p>	<p>The school website mentions the VI Centre and makes it clear that VI students are welcome and included in the school. It signposts parents to several useful agencies and organisations.</p>
	<p>VI awareness in school</p>	<p>There is a whole school Braille Day in January each year, with an assembly, when all the children in the school complete braille activities and become more VI aware.</p> <p>The school may also investigate World Sight Day in October as an alternative/additional relevant option.</p> <p>The SENCO leads disability awareness assemblies focussing on the Special Educational Needs of all students in the school with a disability.</p>
	<p>VI related Fundraisers</p>	<p>The School Parliament chose Guide Dogs – specifically the new SE region training centre – as the focus for a fundraiser last year.</p> <p>A pyjama day was held in school to raise money for Tiger Ward at Great Ormond Street Hospital, where the year 1 VI student is receiving treatment.</p>

	Supplementary Curriculum	<p>Students are taught mobility by the QTVI.</p> <p>Students receive individual weekly ICT lessons to ensure they can use their technology appropriately</p> <p>Students are withdrawn for tests and assessments to the VI Room</p> <p>The student in year 1 has weekly braille lessons</p> <p>The students receive touch typing lessons</p> <p>Pre- and post-learning takes place in these sessions</p>
	Multi-agency working	<p>The students have access to a trained counsellor.</p> <p>Music therapy has been introduced for the year 1 student, and grants sought to cover the costs.</p> <p>There is excellent liaison with the staff at GOSH around the on-going treatment for the year 1 student.</p>
	Social Inclusion	<p>The year 1 student was seated in middle of class with other students all around her. Included in lunchtime play. She was not isolated at all.</p> <p>The year 6 student was seated at the back of class, in the middle of row, working hard on his own. He stated he has a strong friendship group.</p>
	Pupil voice	<p>Each term 10 random children are asked if they can identify the VI students and know how to work and play with them. The responses showed that in their year group, the children are aware how to play and help their friends.</p>
	Parent voice	<p>Parents can raise concerns through daily communication logbooks, telephone and email (these are logged) and parents' evenings with the class teacher</p>
	Staff voice	<p>School staff can raise issues during Inset training, regular meetings and annual reviews</p>
	Transition	<p>Transition to secondary school starts in the February of year 5 with the annual review and parents are encouraged to meet professionals and visit possible schools with the QTVI.</p> <p>Habilitation visits are then arranged before September, so that the students feel safe in their new environments.</p>
<p><i>There are opportunities for children and young people with VI to mix together and establish true and equal friendships</i></p> <p><b>Status: Achieved</b></p>	<p>In class</p> <p>At lunch</p> <p>In the playground</p> <p>School trips</p>	<p>Students are only withdrawn if they need 1-2-1 support. I noticed that both students were sat with their peers, as far as access to technology allowed, but they were not isolated.</p> <p>The students sat with their friends, with the midday supervisor at one end.</p> <p>It was hard to pick out the VI student as she was surrounded by a number of friends and playing happily, talking to the midday supervisor..</p> <p>The year 1 student had been on a recent science trip with her class</p>

	Clubs	<p>In the past VI students have accessed two residential trips with full VITA support.</p> <p>Trips are also arranged to the local library to search for audio books to practise habilitation skills, and to the local shops.</p> <p>Covid has made school clubs more complicated. These are often hosted by external providers. The school offers to support one club per student, with paid VITA support.</p> <p>The year one student sings in the choir and has music lessons in school.</p> <p>Pre-Covid a cookery club was run after school, attended by a VI student, who was supported by VI staff.</p>
<p><i>The achievements of children with VI are celebrated</i></p> <p><b>Status:</b> <b>Achieved</b></p>	<p>Assemblies</p> <p>Displays and signage around the school</p>	<p>On the day of my visit the year one student was given an end of term award in a whole school assembly.</p> <p>The school has excellent displays all around the school, highlighting student work, which are VI accessible (tactile and auditory). Some have buttons to press, and some are in braille. There are excellent displays outside the VI room.</p>
<p><i>The school has undertaken an environmental audit and made appropriate adaptations to ensure an optimal, safe and accessible learning environment</i></p> <p><b>Status</b> <b>Achieved</b></p>	Environmental audit	<p>This has been completed and the QTVI and Habilitation Officer is in constant liaison with premises staff if ever changes need to be made to the school site for safety reasons.</p> <p>There is a one-way system which makes it easy for the VI students to feel safe when in the corridors.</p> <p>Children are made aware where the VI Centre is situated</p>

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<p>This is a very well-managed VI Centre. The Senior Management team are very supportive and have put staff in place with appropriate training to ensure that students are included, and that the VI Quality standards are being met. This is evidenced by the appointment of a QTVI to run the Centre who also provides outreach to a VI student in nearby school.</p>	<p>Much of the work being carried out in the Centre is not evidenced in one place. Please see my comments below under “recommendations” on the benefit of Impact Statements.</p> <p>I hope this report will validate some of the excellent work in the VI Centre at Belmont</p>

Staff are well-trained to meet the individual needs of the students, and proud to work in the Centre. The Centre is well-placed to receive more VI students and to become a beacon for Primary Aged VI Children in the local area.	Academy and that this will give the school confidence to pro-actively market the VI Centre and attract more students. Plans are being made to start a coffee morning in the School House and to develop the sensory room for infants, which has great potential.
The students are confident learners and are happy and emotionally secure. There is excellent support in place to ensure they can access lessons and become independent learners. They have good friendship groups, opportunities for school trips and access to school clubs.	As VI is such a low-incidence disability, it would benefit the students emotionally and develop their social networks if they could meet up with other visually impaired students. See my recommendations below.
The school site is safe and accessible. Signage and displays are excellent. Midday supervisors are well-trained, and children are included in games.	The VI information on the website is not immediately easy to find. It contains useful information and resources, but there is scope for development as a marketing tool. See my comments below.

## **Recommendations**

### **Training**

The role of a QTVI can be a lonely one. It would benefit the QYVI to attend the annual View Conference, and NatSip working days, in order to network and keep abreast of new ideas in the sector.

### **Gathering evidence**

I would suggest creating an Impact Statement for each student, which can be updated as they move into a new Key Stage. These are based on EHCP outcomes and then interventions are logged, and from here it is clear if, when and where there has been an impact. Evidence can be gathered from a variety of sources: correspondence, communication logs, questionnaires, staff comments, progress data, etc. Student, parent and staff voice also feed into this...

*Student voice:* VI students could complete a termly “how it is going questionnaire” re friendships,, well-being and progress.

*Parent voice:* parents could be asked to fill in parent voice questionnaire once a year, as part of the Annual Review process

*Staff voice:* teachers and VITAs could fill one in at the end of each school year to identify gaps in training

## **Marketing the VI Centre**

### *Website*

The VI section of the website was not easy to find. There are some lovely activities taking place at the school, so it would be useful to highlight some of these eg Braille Day or Forest School, with photos. It needs to be more geared to attracting potential new parents into coming to visit the school by inviting them to visit or offering an opportunity to talk to the QTVI.

### *Networking*

The school could offer to host a meeting for all nearby local authorities and VI resource provisions so they are more aware of all that Belmont Academy can offer.

### **School Trips**

Once Covid allows it should be possible to arrange joint trips with other local VI services/schools so that the VI students meet other VI children with similar conditions. Trips to Thorpe Park or Mousetrap Theatre productions work well. Some of these trips could take place after school, and the parents could also be involved or take them. Ideas could include making a Pizza at Pizza Express, or a pottery class.

VI and SEND students could also be given the opportunity to go on special trips together to explore relevant parts of the curriculum, and each be allowed to invite a mainstream friend to join them eg to the seaside, or Bird World. This is great for inclusion and makes the student very popular!

The VI students could also be taken on VI specific trips eg to Sight Village, where they can have hands-on access to new VI technology.

Please read through this draft and let me know of any inaccuracies/changes you would like me to make. I am very happy to talk through any aspects of this report if that would be helpful.

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6th January 2022