



Accreditation Report:

Sitwell Junior Academy

Charter Accreditation Team:

Jill Adams - Accreditation Team Lead (Learning Support Service)

Amanda Moreman - (Rotherham Parents Forum Limited)

Pip Wise - Charter representative

Accreditation Process

The accreditation process is based on the portfolio of evidence and discussions between the Implementation Team, school Charter Team and Accreditation Team around examples of 'Best Charter Practice'.

The accreditation visit is an opportunity to observe and discuss the evidence presented with staff, parents and children.

Evidence Considered:

- Feedback from the Implementation Team
- Portfolio of evidence
- Accreditation visit incorporating:
 - Informal discussions with parents outside school
 - Focus group with parents
 - Focus group with the school council
 - Tour round school with three Y6 children
 - Informal discussions with children and staff during the tour
 - Meeting with school Charter Team, a representative from each staffing area
 - Meeting with the Acting Deputy Head Jennifer Dawson and Charter Champion, Helen Thorpe
 - Observation and discussion related to the portfolio of evidence
 - Observation and discussion around identified areas of Best Charter Practice

Accreditation - Charter Gold

The team were very impressed by the commitment to developing partnership working with parents and carers through improved communication. The selection of parents both in the focus group and in the school playground overwhelmingly used the word 'approachable'. Adults appreciated the welcome that both they and their children received in school, highlighting the presence of staff in the playground at the beginning and at the end of the day, the newsletter, Twitter and invitations to come into school.





Particularly impressive was the response by parents, who are not fluent English speakers, who told us that they are confident that they will be able to effectively communicate their needs in school. The parents praised the efforts of the school to develop communication, one describing how she always felt involved even though she isn't able to come in very often.

The team were thrilled by the exciting learning opportunities offered to the children based on first hand practical experiences enabling all children to take part in learning from the same starting point.

The school is an exciting place to learn which is evident from the wide range of displays of work and high quality photographs of the children engaged in a huge range of activities around the school. The children, of all ages, described their learning with great enthusiasm most of which was based on the topic work. In particular they enthused about the engagement and express sessions at the beginning and end of each half term, giving opportunities to showcase their work with their parents and carers. As we were shown around school by the children the pride they have for their school really shone through. They were keen to point out the different aspects of learning and the successes enjoyed by their peers in a variety of competitions. At the same time the commitment to the whole child through the embedding of the Sitwell 7 values was having a real impact as the children were very clear in their responsibilities and how they responded to challenges and to each other. The children were able to describe, almost subconsciously, the impact the curriculum and the values of the Sitwell 7 has had on their own personal development.

Diversity is celebrated in school and the effort to ensure all parents can take part in all activities is appreciated. Parents specifically approached us to tell us how well school celebrated and valued diversity.

Amanda Moreman, of the Accreditation team described the sense of belonging that is almost tangible within the school and exemplified by the way the children are and how they view and behave towards one another. There is a very strong sense of school identity and children and parents are confident that they are equal partners in this relationship. They know they are valued and they know they will be heard.





Welcome and Care

The following was highlighted as Best Charter Practice:

The school have worked hard to develop an innovative and exciting curriculum based on first hand experiences.

The children are very enthusiastic about their learning. They listed many topics they had enjoyed and the visits. They described the visits they'd been on and they particularly enjoy the engage and express activities which they described in detail and with much enthusiasm. The parents were equally enthusiastic describing the topic work as 'fab'. The overwhelming description of their children's relationship with school was one of real enjoyment.

The children were really proud of their school and obviously took great pleasure in showing us around. They were very aware of the learning taking place in other year groups and were able to tell us all about the exhibits and displays. Work is displayed to a very high quality and every available space is used. The express sessions at the end of a topic were very popular and the children emphasised that everyone took part. At lunchtimes the children spoke about the importance of learning and that the skills they got from school would help them get good jobs. They liked the topic work and described learning as 'fantastic', 'mindboggling', 'creative' and 'brilliant' (several times!). Many of them accessed the extensive number of clubs available to all children.

The imaginative way in which each topic is developed is truly inspirational. It is clearly appreciated by the parents as evidenced in the feedback gathered following the engage sessions. The feedback from the parents is excellent, with many commenting not only on the quality of work produced but the skills and enjoyment gained by the children with relatively few offering suggestions for improvement. The analysis of the feedback provides a useful overview of the evaluation.

We observed the following as good examples of Welcome and Care

- ✓ *The display of work is of an exceptionally high standard and reflects the excitement and vibrancy of the work undertaken*
- ✓ *The displays are well cared for and appear to be changed frequently.*
- ✓ *A newsletter from each year group at the beginning of each half term informing parents of the curriculum to be covered and visits and expectations of the school*
- ✓ *The newsletters are written in a friendly and enthusiastic way. It is nice to see that alternatives are offered for some children who are not able to access some of the homework tasks at home*
- ✓ *A wide range of learning experiences based on unusual and engaging titles*
- ✓ *Opportunities to attend family learning events for the more formal aspects of the curriculum*





- ✓ *Careful planning to ensure class based experiences are affordable for parents across the year*
- ✓ *Careful explanations about the benefits of the children's learning experiences*
- ✓ *A welcome pack given to all parents detailing essential information*
- ✓ *Celebration of children's half termly homework projects*
- ✓ *Highly valued 'Smile' reward system - all children we spoke to were clear about the system and aspired to reach the 150. They are very aware of children who had achieved theirs and the rewards provided by the school*





Value and Include

The staff are clearly committed to the holistic development of the children and have thought hard about the skills they want to nurture. These values have evolved into the Sitwell 7. This is clearly at the heart of everything the school does. It is evident around the school and in each classroom. The children are very aware of it and in conversation with the children they constantly refer to the skills and values. One girl said "Each month we have a different value, like Resilience, and we follow that one. We didn't think about things like that particularly but now we do. When we make the posters we think about how the world would be a better place if we all used the Sitwell 7".

Many parents commented about how the children had a lot of confidence and a high self-esteem. Many noted that the express activities pushed the children out of their comfort zone and helped to develop self-confidence.

Sitwell is a very inclusive school. Children with additional needs work with their peers in mixed ability groups but have access to a range of support options dependent on their need. The children were barely aware of difference. They just noted that some children needed some additional time with some of the adults in school. At lunchtime one girl described all the children in school as her friends and another said "All these children around me are my friends" and that clearly included a youngster, sat opposite her, who was being supported by an adult whilst eating her lunch.

The following was highlighted as Best Charter Practice:

- ✓ *High quality learning experiences allows each child to commence new topics from the same starting point*
- ✓ *The children and parents recognised that effort, attitude and behaviour is valued and rewarded equally alongside attainment*
- ✓ *Differentiated tasks are offered to all children which they can access if they choose*
- ✓ *The curriculum has the Sitwell 7 at its core, allowing all children opportunities to challenge themselves and become independent, resilient learners. One boy said "You can choose the questions you do in maths, sometimes I pick the hard questions".*
- ✓ *SNOT put the onus on the children to be independent*
- ✓ *Y6 are value leaders and have specific responsibilities on the playground to ensure everyone is included*
- ✓ *Children are given opportunities to develop ideas around enterprise and carry them out independently*
- ✓ *The children know they are listened to.*





Communicate

Communication with Parents

School have been working hard to develop their communication with parents. The school ensures members of staff, including the head teacher, are in the school playground at the beginning and at the end of the school day. Over and above this, class teachers now collect their children from the playground in the morning providing parents the opportunity to see the class teacher. These practices were really valued by the parents. Staff have developed the use of ICT and social media such as Twitter to communicate with parents and, at times, almost providing a visual narrative of the children's involvement in their learning. Parents appreciated seeing what the children were doing in class and on class visits. Parents also commented on getting news of their children receiving 'Smiles' and how much this was valued.

Mr. Moody, alongside the school staff, has put a lot of work into developing the school newsletter which has a friendly tone and has a mix of curricular and practical information alongside photographs and the names of pupils receiving special accreditation. The parents appreciated being informed of what is being taught in school as well as having constant reminders about important dates. They described the pleasure the children got from seeing their names in the 'Let's Celebrate' section.

In the past parents had expressed concern about the transition from the infant school to the junior school and in particular being unable to accompany the children to their new class. To accommodate this the junior school allow the parents to accompany the children to their new classrooms in the first two weeks of the autumn term before being met on the playground like the rest of the children

The parents were confident the school would listen to them and respond quickly to concerns. They also appreciated that school wouldn't always be able to meet their requests but felt that school considered their requests and gave good reasons if they were unable to accommodate them. The parents also commented that teachers were open and honest with them.

We also observed the following examples of good practice for 'Communicate'

- ✓ *An accessible and interesting website, with school and curriculum information, examples of how parents might help their children with homework and lots of photos of the exciting learning taking place within school*
- ✓ *Curriculum workshops allowing parents to learn alongside their children*
- ✓ *Friendly and responsive reception staff (speed of response from office staff was commented on by parents)*
- ✓ *Multilingual staff available in the school and in the office*
- ✓ *Many invitations to take part in events in school*





- ✓ Parental questionnaires on a regular basis which are analysed statistically and negative responses are dealt with by a member of the SMT
- ✓ Evaluation forms for parents to complete after a curriculum visit or school event
- ✓ Sitwell 7 clearly displayed through school
- ✓ Plenty of information about school events and trips and what the children would gain from this
- ✓ A 'You said, so we did' display at the front of the school

Partnership

There has been a focus on developing partnership working on a range of themes in school. Following a reflection of the efficacy of the homework policy by the staff a letter was sent home to parents outlining the research on which school concerns were based and asking for parental and child involvement in formulating the new home learning policy. This is an ongoing piece of work.

We also observed the following examples of good practice for 'Partnership':

- ✓ There is a School Council with two representatives from each class who meet fortnightly. There is a prominent display in school and the children we spoke with told us clearly how the School Council operates.
- ✓ Children's views are sought on school decisions for example they are currently looking to help improve the choice offered for school lunch and have visited Bramley Sunnyside School to help inform their decision
- ✓ Parent views are welcomed when developing policies and the school Charter Team has had involvement in feeding back parental views.
- ✓ There is a strong commitment to embracing diversity and appreciation of other cultures through partnership working with the Methodist church and the local mosque.
- ✓ Personnel and systems have been put in place to ensure parents with E2L are able to fully participate
- ✓ Use of ICT to make links with wider communities across the world
- ✓ Partnership working is strongly part of what the school does
- ✓ Information about children's learning is of a very high standard and regularly produced
- ✓ There is a very active PTA, the 'Friends of Sitwell' group.





Sitwell Juniors is a welcoming, caring, vibrant school with all staff committed to developing true and equal partnership working. The care and commitment is evident from stepping into the playground and crossing the threshold of the school. The confidence and trust the parents have in the school is exemplary. The Charter team would like to thank all the staff of Sitwell Junior for creating such a wonderful, exciting, inviting and loving school which truly has the principles of the Charter at its very heart.

Congratulations for achieving Charter Gold!

This is a fantastic achievement and credit must go to all the staff, governors, parents/carers and children for their vision, commitment and hard work.

Next Steps

The School Charter Team and Charter Champions suggested the following next steps

- ✓ Extend the use of social media so that more parents are using the resource
- ✓ Develop the homework policy alongside children, parents and staff working in equal partnership
- ✓ Ensure the voice of children and parents/carers of children with additional needs is included and to check their experience is as good as their peers

We will be in touch soon about certification and a Charter celebration event. Well done and congratulations on being such a fantastic school through which the true ethos of the Charter principles flow.

Jill Adams
Accreditation Team Lead
27.04.2016

