



Customer Service Excellence
Assessment Report
for
THE DUSTON SCHOOL

By Assessor: Sue Dowey

On behalf of EMQC Ltd

Date of evidence review: 14 January 2010

Date of on-site visit: 4 February 2010

Project Number: 09/1433

1. Summary

1.1 Introduction and background

This Assessment Report covers the services provided by The Duston School. This report includes a brief description of the organisation, the assessment methodology and an overview of how The Duston School demonstrated compliance against the Customer Service Excellence, the UK Government's national standard for excellence in customer service.

The Duston School is a larger than average sized secondary school serving a predominantly suburban community that is economically and socially mixed. The number of students at the time of the assessment was 1180 with 165 staff. The large majority of students are White British with 15% of students coming from a wide range of minority ethnic groups with around 9% of students who do not use English as their first language. The students with learning needs or disabilities is above average and the school has Designated Special Provision for a number of students with autistic spectrum disorders.

The school holds trust status with the Governing Body having responsibility for the strategic direction and general oversight of the operation of the school. Trustees are recruited from a range of backgrounds that include parents, staff, community representatives and LA along with two associate members.

The English OFSTED inspections have resulted in improvements to grades from a 'Notice to Improve' issued in 2007 to Good in 2009.

In June 2009, the Senior Leadership Team won the National Award for 'Outstanding Leadership'. The school hold a number of successful awards / achievements and work with a number of initiatives some of which include; Investors in People, Consistency Management Cooperative Discipline (CMCD), Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM), Sportsmark and Healthy Schools Award.

The assessment process did confirm the school holds the customer e.g. student, parent or partner at the heart of the service delivery. In both my observations and discussions with the range of customers and staff it was very clear that time and effort is given to ensure that the customer experience is a positive as possible.

The school is in now a position owing to its success of having an oversubscription for the next academic year.

1.2 Methodology

The assessment process was a full assessment against all the elements of the Customer Service Excellence Standard.

The customer in the context of this school covers the student, parent, staff, partner or governor.

A half-day pre-assessment meeting was held on Tuesday 12 January to identify the key evidence required and to plan the assessment process. This resulted in a matrix being prepared that showed the key documents cross-referenced with the elements of the Customer Service Excellence criteria. Details of the people to be seen on the assessment visit were also agreed.

Shortly before the assessment visit I carried out a full examination of all the key documents that were listed in the matrix of evidence.

The one day on-site assessment visit started with me meeting the Staff Leadership Team where I outlined the day's activities and observed the management meeting.

Following completion of the assessment I was able to provide feedback to the staff leadership team on the Service's compliance against all the elements of the Customer Service Excellence Criteria and on my recommendation to the EMQC Certification Committee.

1.3 Summary of strengths

The school evidenced a host of strengths and this is recognised by the number of awards and commendations received. Feedback from students, parents, partner agencies and the Chair of Governor's was very positive and they acknowledged the school has come a long way over the past three years from the then poor reputation it held. One comment from a student was:

- *When I heard that I would be coming to Duston I didn't want to because of its bad reputation but now I am here it's really good.*

From the assessment it was clear that the customer sits at the heart of customer service. Students have a contribution in the form of the 'Student Cadre' and from my discussions with a representative group of the Cadre it was evident that they feel empowered to raise any issues with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). They meet with the SLT to discuss issues, ideas or suggestions. The Cadre is given a budget and offer ideas for expenditure to the SLT for consideration. The students were very positive and excited about the pending purchase of IT equipment that can be used for both school activities and use by the wider community.

The Parent Support Advisor helps the school to identify potential problems with students. The Advisor works closely with parents offering support in a number of ways. This post also works closely with both the school attendance and behavioural posts to address potential student / parental issues.

The school has a police officer based within the school building, this has not only given support to the school but also helped remove barriers between student and police, instil further discipline measures in the school, address potential issues as they arise whilst working in partnership with the attendance and parent support roles. This presence of a police officer working with the school assists in issues both within the school environment and out in the wider community.

The head teacher and teaching staff hold regular parent drop in sessions after school where parents can come into the school without an appointment to discuss issues or problems with the student or the school.

The 'Talking Tutor' programme is an excellent example for reaching a hard to reach group e.g. those students where English is not their first language. This is a software translation programme that translates text both verbally and visually and can be accessed during school hours or from home for homework. Another good example is of a severely disabled student who self-assessed the school for its facilities for disabled students, the student's findings resulted in extra facilities being put in to place to improve access for disabled students.

Feedback from parents on the texting service, used particularly during the recent snow conditions with information on school closure, was high on the list of keeping the parent informed. The texting service is also used to alert parents of students not attending school.

Feedback from three parents I spoke to who had found it necessary to make a complaint was extremely positive and comments from the parents were:

- *'My complaint was dealt with better than I ever thought'*
- *'Astounded at how good it was and it couldn't have been handled any better'*
- *'It has made me feel more able to contact the school if I have a problem'*

One complainant felt the school could not differentiate between a comment and complaint, this complainant has a history with the school but two of the responses were:

- *I have no complaint with the speed of response to my contact*
- *I feel that if the school has a pre-defined policy then they show little interest*

1.4 Conclusion and recommendation

The Duston School complies with the requirement of the current version of the Customer Service Excellence. I have highlighted strengths, and also areas for further development.

There are no actions that require immediate attention and I am pleased to pass on my recommendation to EMQC's Certification Committee that The Duston School be recognised as meeting the Customer Service Excellence Standard. Subject to confirmation from the Certification Committee you will be awarded the Customer Service Excellence certificate which will be valid for three years subject to annual monitoring.

There are a few areas which are not fully compliant and I would recommend you develop an action plan to help address these. Progress against the areas of partial compliance will be reviewed at your next visit which will take place in 12 months time.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your kind hospitality and cooperation during this assessment.

Assessor Name: Sue Dowey
Date: 09 February 2010