

CHALLENGE PARTNERS: Quality Assurance Review Written Report

Name of School:	The Village School
School Address:	Grove Park, Kingsbury, London NW9 0JY
Hub School:	Woodfield

Telephone Number:	0208 204 5396
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Unique Reference Number:	101583
Local Authority:	Brent
Type of School:	Special
School Category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	4-19
Number on roll:	277
Head teacher:	Kay Charles

Date of last Ofsted inspection:	October 2016
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding

Date of Quality Assurance Review:	10-12 May 2017
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QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW – SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES¹

School Improvement Strategies:	Outstanding
Outcomes for Pupils is:	Outstanding
Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:	Outstanding
Area of Excellence:	Confirmed and valid for 3 years
Expressive arts	
Previously accredited Areas of Excellence:	
See Ability: an in-school approach to identifying and providing for any level of visual impairment	

Overall Review Evaluation

The Quality Assurance Review found indicators that the Village School appears to be firmly within the Outstanding grade as judged by Ofsted in the school's previous Ofsted report.

1. Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.

Information about the school

- The Village School provides for pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder. There is a very small number of pupils whose primary need is described as moderate learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties.
- The Village School is the largest special school in London. Five classes are based at the neighbouring Kingsbury High School. A further two classes (18 pupils) are predominantly based at the college of North West London.
- The proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) is above the national average and twenty-six languages are spoken in the school. 17% of pupils are of Somali heritage, the largest single group.
- The number of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average. Boys outnumber girls: there are 177 boys and 100 girls.
- The school has the Gold Award for continuing professional and learning development (CPLD) and is a flagship school for the Inclusion Quality Mark.
- From September 2017, the current headteacher will become the executive headteacher across Woodfield School, a neighbouring special school. She is also the current chair of the Brent Schools Partnership. The senior current deputy headteacher will become head of school.

School Improvement Strategies

What Went Well

- The school lives and breathes its vision. It exudes a 'can do' culture which it applies to both staff and pupils.
- Leaders systematically support and challenge teachers to be the best they can through observations, drop-ins and they draw upon an effective system of peer coaching and mentoring. Leaders have a clear understanding of the relative strengths of teaching and learning.
- Leaders at all levels are focused on improving classroom practice.
- Staff turnover is low because staff like working at the school. They are given opportunities to develop professionally including linking with universities for research.
- The curriculum is carefully matched to the three different strands of learner. It is ambitious in its focus on the skills that pupils need and it provides a growing range of opportunities for accredited courses.
- School improvement planning is secure and detailed. All staff are involved in its creation. In addition, there is a detailed layer of subject level planning that sits beneath it.

- Self-evaluation is also thorough and detailed. The school produces both a substantial review document and a succinct summary. These celebrate what has been achieved and what the school is focusing on in the upcoming year.
- The lead therapist is skilled in describing the impact of the therapists on pupils' communication skills and staff skills. This trans-disciplinary working is a strength of the school.
- The training manager and dedicated team track and coordinate the wide range of continuing professional and learning development opportunities effectively across the school. The range of training is carefully matched to the evidence gleaned from the school's self-evaluation activities. Leaders spot potential and match this to opportunities. The school is ambitious in its wish to develop more training and 'trade' this with other schools.
- The quality of middle leadership is strong with a mix of experience and those very new to leadership. They model high quality teaching. They understand and use the school's assessment system to ensure lessons are pitched correctly for all learners. They also understand, and help shape, their areas of responsibility within the school improvement plan.
- The school employs 34 high level teaching assistants to provide high quality support to learning. The school has invested strongly in their training and development as well as that of all support staff. They very largely provide excellent support to the school.
- The school's communication with parents is good and this is aided by the work of two effective family support workers. There is good outreach work to involve families in the learning and development of the pupils.
- During break and lunch times, staff actively engage with the pupils utilising this time well to support pupils' learning.

Even Better If...

...the school improvement plan captured better the richness and variety of work the school is embarking upon, re-ordering the priorities whilst retaining the school's core golden thread.

...the school planned carefully for the rising number of new and less qualified staff joining the school in September 2017 to mitigate any potential, associated risk.

...the school provided further training for middle leaders, especially those new to leadership, in performance management and holding their teams to account.

Pupil Outcomes

- The school is in the process of developing a new system that works in line with the new curriculum and captures the elements of their Progress 8. This

has sought to emulate the mainstream culture of a focus on eight key subjects by adapting it to their pupils' needs. It emphasises personal and social development, communication and cognition, as well as linking these outcomes closely to the pupils' education, health and care plan (EHCP) outcomes. This supports the trans-disciplinary approach, as well as supporting a rich, creative and artistic underpinning of the curriculum.

- The data analysis indicates very strong progress across these eight areas.
- There is no significant variation in the progress made by the school's different groups, such as disadvantaged pupils, by gender, key stage or by primary disability.
- The school is moving towards its own 'V levels' (V for Village) which it has developed in order to assess effectively their pupils and their learning. These levels are moderated by other schools within the Village School Assessment group of seven schools.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

What Went Well

- There are excellent relationships across the school and, in particular, between staff and pupils. Staff know each pupil's individual needs very well.
- Planning is thorough and teachers are well prepared. The children settle quickly to their work at the start of lessons.
- Pupils enjoy their learning at the school. They thrive with the encouragement and support they receive.
- The quality of teaching is high. Many teachers are confident to innovate and leaders encourage this. The teaching observed in the classes for pupils with PMLD was particularly strong.
- The school is well resourced and the building's stunning fabric and design contribute to a feeling of inspiration and focus.
- Interventions are tailored carefully to the needs of each pupil and their impact is monitored systematically. The skilled use of Attention Autism, for example, has had a significant impact on pupils' communication skills and concentration.
- The school makes good use of opportunities to link with universities to develop and evaluate their professional practice and interventions through research.
- Pupil engagement in their learning is very high. The independence of pupils is promoted systematically. Staff expect pupils to do things for themselves incrementally. Support staff know when to step back and let pupils learn at their own pace.

- Transitions within and between lessons are largely very well managed so that little learning time is lost.
- Staff questioning of pupils is skilful and contributes to a culture of challenge for all.
- The new and developing assessment system in the school is understood and used well by middle leaders and classroom leaders, including by the higher level teaching assistants.

Even Better If...

...the school thought carefully about how to support the significant number of new staff joining the school in September so that the best practice is shared systematically across the school.

...the school further developed the strong work already completed on developing the quality of support by teaching assistants and other adults in class.

...the school developed further its assessment system so that it matches the curriculum more closely, is easier and less time consuming for staff to use, is not fixed to specific assessment points in the year and is more flexible in approach.

...the school further enhanced access by pupils to a system of augmentative and alternative communication within the school and within pupils' homes.

...some teachers structured their lessons with a clearer focus on pupil outcomes.

Quality of Area of Excellence

Expressive arts

Why has this area been identified as a strength?

Expressive arts are a focus across the school. Progress and accreditation in these areas are a particular strength. There is a growing number of future pathways in expressive arts for the students to follow. There is also a good range of extra curricular opportunities to engage with the local community.

What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

The school has restructured in order to form a sizeable expressive arts department led by an assistant headteacher. A new framework for engaging external professionals has been established this year, 'Safe Arts'. The school works in partnership with Professor Ockelford and Roehampton University to develop expertise in arts accreditation, specifically Sounds of Intent. This is being expanded to cover art, movement and drama and multi-sensory assessment frameworks.

What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?

There is continuing success in the number of the more able students achieving GCSE art. A high number of students achieve the Arts Award across all levels and pathways, including the PMLD classes. This year, five classes will achieve Arts Awards, including some at Bronze level (level 1 accreditation). There are national performance opportunities in the arts on offer to students; this year the school's band will perform at the Music for Youth National Fringe Festival in Birmingham. All students are making progress in the Sounds of Intent framework and this will be accredited through the Trinity College of Music, London.

What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?

Following discussion with the headteacher, the school would not like any further support at this time. Leaders consider that they receive appropriate support through the review process and also the Challenge Partners' network hub meetings.

This review will support the school's continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities.