VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR OAKLEY SCHOOL

Name of School:	Oakley School
Headteacher/Principal:	Samantha Perryman
Hub:	London AP Special
School phase:	2-19 special
MAT (if applicable):	Not applicable

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this virtual Leadership Quality Assurance Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	05/05/2021
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Leading
Date of last QA Review	28/10/2019
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	03/04/2019

Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising host school leaders and visiting reviewers, agree that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

Leadership at all Levels	Leading
School Improvement Strategies	Leading
Approach to recovery and remote learning	Not applicable
Area of Excellence	Not applicable
Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence	Not applicable
Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate	Leading

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

The peer evaluation estimate included on this report has been collectively agreed between the lead reviewer, review team and host school. The estimate is based on the evidence seen as part of the virtual Leadership Quality Assurance Review.

Whilst every effort has been made to triangulate the evidence presented during the review, it is important to note that the nature of working remotely means that the estimate given only encompasses that which is able to be explored virtually.

1. Context and character of the school

Oakley is a special school for pupils with severe and complex needs, with 211 on roll. It is on three sites and has a satellite class in a mainstream primary school. The assessment and observation Nursery provision is on one site and children from here transfer to Oakley and other schools. The rest of phase one (5 to 7/8 year olds), phases two and three (7/8 to 15/16 year olds) are all on the Tunbridge Wells site. Phase four (15/16 to 19 year olds) is located in a neighbouring town at the Tonbridge Site. All pupils, except some in the Nursery, have education health and care plans (EHCP). Over a third are disadvantaged. The school is one of 24 special schools in Kent that work closely together in the Kent Special Educational Needs Trust.

The headteacher became the substantive head in September 2020. There is a deputy headteacher and four assistant headteachers (three FTE) in the senior leadership team (SLT) and phase leaders join the extended leadership (ELT) team. As a result of Covid 19 precautions, assistant headteachers were allocated to each phase. During the two lockdowns, varying proportions of the pupils were present, rising to half towards the end of the second lockdown.

The school has devised a creative curriculum for each phase which focuses on relevant, interesting activities that lead towards independence from the very beginning. There are also different learning pathways for pupils with differing cognitive strengths and needs.

2.1 Leadership at all Levels - What went well

- Senior leaders hold and communicate highly effectively the strategic vision of ‘children and young people at the heart of all we do’, as they develop the school for the best outcomes. The strong teamwork is evident at all levels in the school and contributes extremely well to everyone’s sense of well-being. Senior leaders carefully evaluate staff’s workload and well-being when they make decisions.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work really well with the local authority. Together they develop provision for the changing special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) of pupils within the school and the locality.
- Governors are fully involved in supporting the leadership team and school community, especially during the pandemic, by reiterating key communication and remaining visible through virtual platforms. Governors attended the Friday briefings and encouraged staff to take up Covid 19 vaccinations.
- Leaders continue to develop the creative curriculum so that it is dynamic and supports all aspects of pupils’ learning and development. Pupils understand their feelings, are given appropriate ways to express them and staff support with sensory regulation input. As pupils returned to school, leaders implemented the

recovery curriculum. They ensured that teachers were given relevant, practical training to implement the 'Thrive' approach to emotional awareness and self-regulation, for example. This has resulted in a reduction of pupils being out of class and removing themselves from class.

- Leaders provide bespoke continuing professional development and training that is aligned to the continually evolving school development plan and career development of staff. There are numerous examples of staff progressing from learning support assistant to class teacher and now also to the ELT. Recently appointed assistant head teachers are highly effective in researching and checking new software. For example, a system that incorporates all incidents of pupils' behaviour and how staff proactively deal with these enabled leaders to have an overview of the effectiveness of staff training.
- The decision leaders took to locate an assistant headteacher in phase 4 provision has resulted in good support for the phase leader and better communication with the senior leadership team. It has also enabled phase 4 staff to feel much more part of the school, its culture and values.
- Leaders are now applying a KISS analysis (Keep, Improve, Stop, Start) to all the changes they had made to school systems, pupil groupings and teaching and learning delivery. This analysis helps leaders to evaluate and ensure the maximum benefit for the whole school as we emerge from the pandemic.

2.2 Leadership at all Levels - Even better if…

…the leadership team, including governors, continued to respond strategically to the changing cohort of the school and level of SEND needs within the locality.

…the wider leadership team continued to evaluate how all leadership roles drive the strategic improvement of the whole school after the pandemic.

3.1 School improvement strategies and the extent to which these address the needs of different groups of learners, especially disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs- What went well

- Leaders have successfully addressed the EBIs from the previous report. School documentation clearly puts pupils at the centre of all their actions. They have designed the self-evaluation form to be an evolving document that fully reflects their accurate evaluation of where the school is and how staff are continually trained. Staff have worked together highly successfully to collaborate with planning and learning delivery throughout the pandemic. This has led to greater consistency across the school, and pupils have demonstrated independence and curiosity when working at school or home on their EHCP targets.
- Each term leaders give staff time to plan collaboratively in their phases. This gives teachers opportunities to share ideas, good practice and improve their skills as well as reducing teacher workload and allowing the phase leader to quality assure the provision. For example, an experienced teacher provided support for newly qualified teachers and a teacher new to the school. They were supported in adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils in pathway one.
- Teachers creatively plan opportunities for pupils to practise and apply life skills in different contexts within school. This results in reducing anxiety for staff and pupils about going out into the community. Two classes in phase three, for example, collaborated to host or attend work experience in a café, gym and cinema.
- Teachers plan and deliver personalised learning for pupils to feel safe and make progress. For example, one pupil in Reception has personalised photographs as a communication aid and, as a result, he happily transitions from home to school. He is well prepared for the routine and is making significant progress with his picture-exchange communications.
- Therapists deliver therapy within the classroom using a facilitative approach. As a result, teachers and support staff learn the skills, good practice is shared, and therapy is interwoven throughout the curriculum. This is evidenced by sensory items and integration equipment being brought into the classroom so that the staff team can deliver pupils' therapy flexibly and responsively.
- Leaders regroup pupils into classes each year according to their stage of development and specific needs. This has had a positive impact on pupils' well-being, peer relationships and progress this year. Creating a younger pathway one class has been particularly effective in meeting pupils' needs within the classroom.

3.2 School improvement strategies and the extent to which these address the needs of different groups of learners, especially disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs - Even better if…

…leaders continued to research and make a decision about the best platforms for recording pupils' holistic progress to enable whole school tracking and reporting.

4.1 Approach to recovery and remote learning - What went well

- Leaders and teachers responded rapidly, and adapted and improved learning between each lockdown. They provided home learning packs, resources and online teaching promptly, regularly contacted pupils and families at home. Safeguarding was a priority for all pupils. Staff creatively found ways to engage families who had previously had little contact with staff at school by providing food parcels, doorstep visits, video and telephone calls, email and 'class dojo' communications.
- Senior leaders had budgeted to provide new laptops for all staff. This significantly reduced workload and enabled good communication for all. All staff responded to several questionnaires checking on their wellbeing and they said communication had improved and they could raise any concerns directly with the SLT. Pupils really appreciated the virtual meetings with teachers and their peers.
- All teachers continued to prioritise pupils' EHCP targets when they planned and provided home learning and parents were therefore much more involved and understood them better. This led to highly detailed and effective EHCP annual reviews through online platforms.
- Phase four teachers have used the pandemic to analyse the effectiveness of college and work placements. Some of these now take place virtually. In-person placements will now be time-limited to reduce pupils' anxieties. Staff have devised creative ways of providing work experience on the school site, providing a café, washing cars, working in the allotment and supporting the site team.
- Leaders have designated catch-up funding to provide additional reading resources for pupils such as 'reading pens' that 'read' text to the pupil. This has engendered a love of reading in previously reluctant or frustrated pupils. Teachers received training to further improve the teaching of reading, and books are graded accurately.

4.2 Approach to recovery and remote learning - Even better if…

…leaders continued to embed the use of information technology and extend its use in the curriculum and for staff training.

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

The head teacher and deputy have attended the London and South East special hub weekly meetings which have provided instant support for decisions that needed to be made quickly in response to the pandemic and government direction. They have really appreciated and valued these.

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.

Schools can also access the School Support Directory, the Challenge Partners online tool that enables schools to connect with other schools in your hub and across the national network of schools.

Schools can also attend Sharing Leading Practice events where schools showcase excellent and/or innovative practice. Sharing Leading Practice events allow school leaders with specific improvement needs to visit a school or attend an online webinar hosted by a school, with outstanding provision in that area.

Both the School Support Directory and the Shared Leading Practice events can be accessed via the Challenge Partners website.