



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR WATERGATE SCHOOL

Name of School:	Watergate
Headteacher/Principal:	Linda Matthews
Hub:	London Special and Alternative Provision
School phase:	Special Primary
MAT (if applicable):	N/A

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	30/04/2025
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	N/A
Date of last QA Review	19/06/2024
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	09/03/2022

Quality Assurance Review

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

Leadership at all levels

Quality of provision and outcomes Leading

AND

Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs Leading

Area of excellence N/A

Previously accredited valid areas of excellence N/A

Overall peer evaluation estimate Leading

Important information

- The QA Review provides a peer evaluation of a school's practice in curriculum, teaching and learning, and leadership. It is a voluntary and developmental process, and the peer review team can evaluate and offer 'peer evaluation estimates' based only on what the school chooses to share with them.
- The QA Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades. The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is developmental not judgmental.
- The QA Review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. If you choose to share this report, or extracts thereof, externally (e.g. on your website or with parents), please ensure that it is accompanied with the following text:

Challenge Partners is a charity working to advance education for the public benefit. We are not a statutory accountability body. The QA Review does not audit schools' safeguarding or behaviour policies and practices. However, Lead Reviewers and visiting reviewers are expected to follow Challenge Partners' safeguarding policy and report any concerns as set out in the procedures.

1. Context and character of the school

Watergate is a local authority special school in the London Borough of Lewisham, for pupils aged 4-11 years. The school is based on two sites, one at Bellingham and a temporary site at Ladywell. All the pupils have education, care and health plans, (EHCPs) for their special educational needs (SEND). These are primarily severe or profound learning difficulties and associated complex needs, including autism spectrum conditions.

Most pupils come from Lewisham and surrounding boroughs on Local Authority school transport. A small proportion of pupils are brought in by families/carers. The school is supported by a multi-disciplinary team, including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, and physiotherapists, who work closely with class teams and pupils to comprehensively meet their needs. The school employs a music therapist who works with a number of pupils on both sites.

Watergate has a diverse pupil population. As a majority of pupils are socially disadvantaged, the school aims to provide an 'equity' of offer, developing cultural capital to facilitate pupils' progression into secondary provision and beyond. The school promotes development for all its staff, including the training and promotion of teaching assistants to become teachers at the school. It supports Early Careers Teachers (ECTs) most years.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- As one visitor said, 'Watergate school is a hub of hope'. It is, indeed, a very joyful, vibrant place of learning for pupils, families and staff. Staff enjoy their work, there is little turnover. Pupils enter eagerly; attendance is above most other special schools.
- Leaders have a strong, aspirational vision and exceedingly robust 'can do' attitudes, providing a highly effective foundation for pupils' independence, confidence, communication and life-long learning. The work they have done to adapt their temporary accommodation at Ladywell is testament to this.
- This vision drives leaders' actions beyond the school. They work passionately with pupils' families, other mainstream and special schools and the wider community to give pupils a voice, make them visible to others and inspire positive mindsets and attitudes towards diversity and disability in all.

- Teamwork is highly effective and coherent. When asked about well-being, staff said that they appreciate 'being able to pop into others' offices and classrooms, laughing together and celebrating each other's successes'. One member of staff said, 'If I see a child do something for the first time, I can share it with the nearest person knowing they will understand and celebrate'.
- Staff at all levels play an integral part in the school. They are flexible and innovative bringing new ideas and initiatives. Senior and middle leaders play a key part in managing developments, ensuring that pressure points and change are spread out across the year so that there are also times to reflect and 'moments to breathe'. For example creating a calendar of continuous professional development (CPD) to ensure coverage and balance across the year.
- Relationships and interactions throughout the school, including pupils, staff, therapists and parents are extremely supportive and respectful. This was evident at the start of the school day when staff warmly welcomed pupils, working in effective partnership with parents and transport providers to make this transition time peaceful and positive for all.
- There is a very strong collegiate approach. Everyone, including reception and administrative staff, teaching assistants and teachers, knows every pupil well, supporting flexible, innovative teamwork and a very strong sense of community. All staff interact warmly and appropriately with pupils as they move around the school.
- Teaching staff constantly adapt their understanding and approaches as pupils develop and progress. Alongside scheduled and planned in-service training days, a weekly 'sharing sofa' provides opportunities for diverse staff, including ECTs and long standing leaders, to share current scenarios and 'problem solve' together. As one leader said, 'The children grow, develop and change, so we have to adapt what we are doing.'
- Parents are supported through coffee mornings, community lunches, special events and a parent- initiated Whatsapp group as some bring their children to school. They are empowered and enabled to see positives and potential in their children. They appreciate the school greatly, as one said, 'Staff put children first and enter their world rather than expecting them to enter theirs'.

2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if...

- ... curriculum tags on 'Evidence for Learning' records were embedded so that middle leaders have an additional tool to monitor the implementation and impact of their curriculum areas.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- The curriculum is broad, meaningful and relevant, promoting pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Throughout the school bespoke individual educational plans (IEPs) are based on EHCPs and broader curriculum targets. As one teacher said, 'It's a holistic curriculum, everything we do is so meaningful and tailor-made for our pupils, this makes a perfect recipe for engagement.'
- Pupils make very good progress against their targets because the curriculum is exceedingly well adapted, pupils are supported very well and aspirations are high. This progress is evident in learning journals, case studies, pupil data, IEPs and curriculum reviews. Reception pupils in one class had found it difficult to sustain focus and be with others when they started at the school. Now these children engage socially and cognitively and worked creatively with playdough together for a substantial period of time.
- Communication, including reading in its widest form, is central to pupils' learning. Total communication is used throughout the school, enabling pupils to respond to and use symbols, sign and speech. Pupils in a Key Stage 2 class joined in songs about the days of the week, identified and displayed the correct day as part of their early morning routine. One pupil used signs to express his request whilst other pupils enjoyed books in the school's engaging library.
- Therapies including physiotherapy, MOVE, speech and language, music, occupational as well as sensory diets are woven into teaching, providing an overarching, holistic approach. Pupils with physical challenges were encouraged and supported to use both hands and to move away from walking frames in practical tasks.
- Resources and classrooms are very conducive to learning and well kept. Staff continually 'revisit, refresh and replenish' resources ensuring these are conducive to pupils' needs. Interactive white boards are used extremely well for pupils' learning. Resources include a diverse range of images which pupils can relate to and which help them all prepare for life in modern Britain. One pupil said, 'My Mum' when he saw the image of a female in hijab.
- Activities and work are intentionally tailored around pupils' interests and needs, helping them progress and meet their bespoke targets. Pupils develop communication and social skills at daily snack times which vary between classes. In one class pupils sat around tables, chatting with staff and each other, in another one pupil was lying on the floor as part of her physiotherapy and in another, pupils chose snacks from a class 'shop'.

- Pupils behave extremely well. They are very encouraging and supportive to each other, saying 'good job' and 'well done' when their peers succeed. Information in 'relational support plans' (RSPs) is focussed and succinct, reflecting pupils' progress as staff know individual triggers and effective means of de-escalation well before distress or crisis occur.
- Staff recognise that all pupils' behaviour is communication, understanding that any distress or inappropriate action is a pupils' way of telling them something. Staff do not use sanctions but skilfully build trusting relationships with pupils, altering their responses accordingly. In one class, a very few pupils who were distressed or dysregulated were given space, time and/or the opportunity to walk. This is highly effective and the school is very calm and orderly.
- Weekly assemblies are fun, collective times for the school community. These are conducted consecutively for three different groups of pupils, adapting each for bespoke needs. Pupils of different ages enjoyed dancing together, learning moves from teachers and demonstrating their own. It was a very special moment when a girl with physical disabilities initiated a dance with her friend which they both enjoyed together.

3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if...

- ... an alternative assessment tool was found to capture, record and show the progress of the small number of more able pupils at Watergate.

4.1 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - What went well

- Leaders and staff are committed to providing cultural capital for all pupils, especially those who are most disadvantaged. They actively promote this by including frequent trips to local supermarkets, other shops, libraries and parks as well theatres, museums, circus and zoo, within the curriculum. Pupils who are not yet ready to leave the school benefit from visiting a 'shop' in a classroom, visits from the farm and creative workshops in opera and theatre.
- Staff know the interests and likes of all pupils very well, including those who are even more disadvantaged by their profound SEND. They build on these in order to promote motivation at, and enjoyment of, school. One very sociable, visually impaired pupil who likes the sound of vehicles and horns waits by the school gates with a member of staff at the beginning of each day until all the taxi drivers have left sounding their horns and chatting with him as they pass.

- Communication is encouraged and celebrated at all levels, helping enrich life and learning. Pupils in one class who are further disadvantaged by their complex medical needs interacted well with adults and peers as they gathered round a keyboard enjoying music together.
- Staff are highly attuned to the needs of all pupils, including those who are most disadvantaged, promoting positive, effective strategies for pupils to mitigate the impact of triggers and anxieties. This helps sustain very positive attitudes, relationships and learning. For example, staff know pupils' needs and provide fine motor play and calm spaces for some.
- Along with most children, pupils at the school who are further disadvantaged, enjoy 'toilet humour'. The leader of MOVE, an intervention to promote physical skill and strength, has creatively harnessed this interest through 'FART' club. Pupils here eagerly reach to press large 'buttons' programmed with fart noises, thereby extending their physical skills in a way they find highly amusing and enjoyable.

4.2 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - Even better if...

... the school continued to extend opportunities for families of pupils who are further disadvantaged (within the Lewisham Borough) to build relationships and support for each other and have a collective 'voice'.

Following the QA Review

The review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. However, we encourage you to share the main findings with your hub/hub manager so that they can support your hub's activity planning. Challenge Partners will also collate and analyse content reports from across the hub networks including using AI tools to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector (sharing these with the partnership) each year. The QA Review reports remain confidential to Challenge Partners and the host school. This ensures that schools embrace the review as a development process, acting as a catalyst for their ongoing improvement. This is the primary purpose of the QA review. However, our aim is that the thematic analysis will demonstrate the additional value of a sector wide overview, illustrated with real-life examples.



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For further support following your QA Review, schools can 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. The School Support Directory can be accessed via the Challenge Partners website. (<https://www.challengepartners.org/>)

Finally, following the QA Review, schools may find it useful to refer to research such as the EEF toolkit to help inform their approach to tackling the EBIs identified in the report (<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit>)