



## QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

### REVIEW REPORT FOR BLATCHINGTON MILL SCHOOL

<b>Name of School:</b>	Blatchington Mill School
<b>Headteacher/Principal:</b>	Kate Claydon
<b>Hub:</b>	Brighton and Hove Hub
<b>School phase:</b>	Secondary
<b>MAT (if applicable):</b>	Not applicable

<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:</b>	The school requested verbal estimates only
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	24/06/2024
<b>Overall Estimate at last QA Review</b>	Not applicable
<b>Date of last QA Review</b>	28/11/2022
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	Good
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	22/02/2022



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#### Quality Assurance Review

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

<b>Leadership at all levels</b>	The school requested verbal estimates only
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<b>Quality of provision and outcomes</b>	The school requested verbal estimates only
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**AND**

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

<b>Area of excellence</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Previously accredited valid areas of excellence</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Overall peer evaluation estimate</b>	The school requested verbal estimates only
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***The Quality Assurance Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades. The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is developmental not judgmental.***

***Please note that Challenge Partners is a school improvement charity and not a statutory accountability body. The QA Review does not audit schools' safeguarding procedures, handling or behaviour policies, however, Lead Reviewers and visiting reviewers are expected to follow Challenge Partners' Safeguarding Policy and report any concerns.***

## **1. Context and character of the school**

Blatchington Mill School is a large mixed comprehensive school. The proportion of disadvantaged students and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is lower than the national average. Student attainment is slightly above national averages in end of Key Stage 4 examinations. There have been significant changes in senior leadership at the school in recent years. A new headteacher took up the role in November 2021 and two new deputy headteachers took up their roles in February and May 2022. Two new assistant headteachers took up their roles in September 2023 and January 2024. The school has also seen significant changes to the governing body since autumn 2021 with eight new governors including two co-chairs replacing the long-standing chair of governors.

Leaders are ambitious for their students and aim to provide an exceptional education which delivers excellence in all areas. The school motto is 'Involvement, Achievement, Care' and this is demonstrated through the ethos of being an inclusive school which celebrates diversity.

The school suffered significant disruption in January 2024 due to an arson attack. Ongoing challenges because of this include the refurbishment of the food and design rooms which are not expected to be ready until April 2025.

### **2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well**

- Leaders have worked actively on the Even Better Ifs (EBIs) from the last review. Extensive work has been done with the relatively new governing body who are more present in school and support the quality assurance programme. Data analysis has become more frequent to regularly monitor progress and hold middle leaders to account.
- School leaders are working proactively on their three-year school improvement plan. Progress against targets is monitored regularly and governors feel they are able to support and challenge leaders since they have received relevant training. Middle leaders feel department improvement plans are useful and 'the school has the balance between scrutiny and striving to improve'.
- Continuing professional development (CPD) for all staff is well planned and aligns with priorities on the school's improvement plan. The focus is primarily to support teachers to enact the ambition of the curriculum and provide strategies which empower subject specific pedagogy.
- Leaders in faculty areas that excel are proactive within the local learning community and beyond. A member of the modern foreign languages (MFL) team works with the University of York and delivers CPD courses for the language driven pedagogy department.

- The internal alternative provision (AP) has been asked for case studies as part of the local authority audit to share good practice in meeting the social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs of students. The school is also leading on developing subject networks across the city.
- Staff well-being is very important to leaders. Staff are consulted on changes to policies and arranging the calendar to support workload. Staff feel that the learning environment is now more conducive to learning.
- Relationships between staff are positive and they feel valued by leaders at the school. Staff are more willing to give additional time to support leaders and students because of this.
- Leaders are keen to work with all stakeholders to enhance student provision. The Blatchington Mill Anti-Racist Community (BARC) are a group of parents/carers and staff who meet half-termly to discuss and plan for tackling matters related to discrimination.
- Leaders have clear action plans and strategies to ensure attendance and punctuality improves further across year groups. Collective responsibility, including at tutor level, allows for entry intervention to take place including family contact. Recent work completed with students showing signs of emotional based school avoidance (EBSA) has been shared as good practice with other schools in the network.

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

- ... leaders engaged in a deeper evaluation of policies and processes to assess their impact and support the development of next steps.
- ... leaders at all levels more closely monitored and evaluated the use of praise and rewards within curriculum areas to further motivate and encourage student engagement and independent learning.
- ... leaders ensured a greater emphasis on recognising the contribution of student leadership within the school community as well as providing more clarity around the progressive pathways available for students across year groups.

## **3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well**

- Staff have been working on the EBIs identified at the last review. Staff at Blatchington Mill pursue a shared vision to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all students, which is embedded securely and consistently across the school.

- The personal development curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced towards building sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning. Students engage well with the relatable topics such as voting and digital literacy.
- Leaders at all levels are currently focused on supporting responsive teaching and learning as part of 'Blatch in Action'. In Year 8 science, the teacher insisted on cold calling when questioning to check understanding on the differences between wasps and bees. In Year 8 music, the teacher addressed misconceptions by modelling the Jess Glynne song. Work in computing demonstrated habitual retrieval activities in practice such as the python quiz.
- Positive attitudes in lessons demonstrate students' engagement in their learning. Students across most of the school are compliant and can participate in lessons free from disruption leading to better levels of engagement. During tutor time in Years 7 and 8, students were respectful of each other's views when debating whether 16-year-olds should be given the right to vote. Students felt safe to give their opinion as the teacher had clear routines and expectations. In Year 8 design technology, clear explanations on how to use tools such as the junior hacksaw when making a wooden box ensured safety and clear expectations.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge, which is developed through well targeted professional development, allows them to focus on vocabulary to deepen pupil understanding of key topic areas. In Year 8 drama, the use of key terminology linked to the topic of Blood Brothers supported students to use terms such as 'nature' and 'nurture' correctly.
- The school has its own onsite AP which supports a wide range of students, including complex learning needs, neurodiverse students as well as some with challenging behaviours. A dedicated team of academic mentors also delivers support and intervention, to work with students who struggle to manage their own behaviour within lessons. Students in the AP overall now have better attendance, reduced behaviour points and suspensions. In addition, all students that started in the AP in September have now returned to mainstream education.
- There is a focus on inclusivity and the whole community is seen as being part of 'Team Blatch'. Careful consideration has been given to the language used in school including the use of 'celebrate not tolerate'. The headteacher leads on assemblies; staff have had training including on unconscious bias; and consideration has been given to include representation for speaker visits.

- There is a focus on ensuring all students receive their careers entitlement across year groups. Students met showed ambition in their future pathways and felt supported to make well informed decisions. The destination figures show that the number of students not in any form of education or training is low.

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

- ... the purpose of learning was shared in a way that supports students to confidently articulate what they are learning and why, and how they know if they are successful.
- ... every lesson featured opportunities where students with high prior attainment were appropriately challenged to improve their ambition and create a thirst for learning.
- ... appropriate approaches to provide students with feedback were consistently implemented within each subject, and all teachers systematically checked students' understanding to respond as necessary within lessons.

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

- In response to previous EBIs, leaders have built capacity and a greater understanding of how the landscape is changing to meet the needs of students with SEND. There is a clear structure around appraisals for teaching assistants and training has been built in to maximise knowledge and capacity for working in this area.
- All students are given a Chromebook. This supports disadvantaged students and students with SEND to complete homework and revision in their own time. In Year 9 MFL lessons, students with SEND showed high levels of engagement when using technology to learn about tourism.
- To support transition, the school runs a summer school free for all students joining the school. There is a focus on students with SEND and extensive literacy work is done to support intervention for when they arrive.
- The school's approach to supporting disadvantaged students is based on understanding their individual needs and difficulties. All teachers are required to have seating plans that identify disadvantaged students, and be attentive to

any issues that are affecting their learning. The quality of learning in books across subjects shows no difference compared to peers.

- The extracurricular programme is well promoted with a fair advertising all the different opportunities. The involvement of disadvantaged students in extra-curricular opportunities is proportionally higher than their peers. Key stage 3 students said there were 'excellent extracurricular opportunities for all students'.

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

- ... appropriate strategies to adapt teaching to meet the needs of all students, including those with SEND or on an SEMH pathway, were used in all lessons.
- ... whole-school strategies for disadvantaged students were consistently embedded across the school in the classroom to help further close the achievement gap.

### **5. Area of Excellence**

Not applicable

#### **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 report content to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector each year.

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.

Schools can also attend Sharing Leading Practice (SLP) 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.



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Both the School Support Directory and the Shared Leading Practice events 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>).