



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR BLATCHINGTON MILL SCHOOL

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

Overall, Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	The school requested verbal estimates only
Date of this Review:	10/03/2025
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Not applicable
Date of last QA Review	24/06/2024
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	22/02/2022



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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	The school requested verbal estimates only
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Quality of provision and outcomes	The school requested verbal estimates only
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AND

Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged students and students with additional needs

Area of excellence	Leadership of Initial Teacher Education and Early Career Teaching
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Previously accredited valid areas of excellence	Not applicable
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Overall peer evaluation estimate	The school requested verbal estimates only
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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:



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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

Blatchington Mill School is a large mixed 11 to 16 comprehensive local authority maintained school with 1637 students on roll. There are 330 students in each Year group. The school is oversubscribed and as a result of falling rolls the local authority has asked the school to reduce its PAN from September 2026 to 300.

There are fewer disadvantaged students, English as an additional language (EAL) and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) than the national average. The percentage of SEN support pupils is above the national average. 25% of the school's students are Black and racially minoritised. The school set up its own alternative provision in September 2023 and is currently supporting 36 students across all year groups primarily students on a (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) SEMH pathway and 40 (Emotionally Based School Avoidance) EBSA pupils, again across all year groups.

The headteacher has been in post since November 2021 and leads a collaborative, cohesive senior leadership team. Leaders are highly ambitious for all students and aim to deliver excellence and exceptionality in all areas. The school motto of 'Involvement, Achievement, Care' underpins an inclusive, caring culture.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Under the current leadership there has been a positive shift in school culture to one of professional trust which has kindness, care and approachability at its core. Senior leaders through 'deliberate restlessness' have implemented incremental steps which have led to sustainable change and a cohesive, positive culture with ambition for all students. Its impact is evidenced in the 2024 outcomes with the school gaining it's best ever results and Progress 8 moving to above national average.
- Leaders have carefully revised the school day, tutor time and the curriculum at Key Stage 3 introducing a new model which allows pupils to choose three creative options. This has resulted in greater engagement and focus from pupils in Year 9.
- Shared strategies 'Brilliant at Blatch' suggests various pedagogical approaches to be used in lessons and all start with a 'Do Now' activity promoting retrieval. Lesson explorations showed that the 'Do Now' is

embedded and instrumental in improving punctuality and quickly engaging pupils in their learning.

- Senior leaders have established a rigorous quality assurance system to monitor teaching and learning. Middle leaders are empowered to quality assure within their departments and paired with other departments sharing good practice and observations. Learning Resource Coaches quality assure and lead on pedagogy, supporting teachers where needed.
- Relationships are respectful across the school and students say that staff are approachable and caring. This positive ethos is created through staff greeting students at the start of lessons and in the corridors and also through the rewards system, ensuring students feel valued and high expectations reinforced.
- Careers provision is carefully planned for all year groups and is delivered biweekly through the tutor programme. Assemblies educate students on a range of jobs and routes such as apprenticeships and provider visits from further education colleges such as Plumpton. Students also benefit from a post 16 options evening at the start of year 11.
- Governance is extremely strong; they know the school well. They are fully involved with the setting of the strategic plan and are aligned with the Head's vision. They hold leaders to account through the quality of education and pastoral committees and are advised by two Senior Leadership Team (SLT) clusters.
- Blatch is a caring community with wellbeing at its heart. A clear sense of purpose has emanated out of the half termly student voice feedback. Students attend governor board meetings and lead assemblies on such days as Remembrance Day and Black History month. Updates are fed back to the student body in a recorded video session in tutor time and students have effected important improvements such the Mental Health Champions suggesting The Cloud space.

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

...whole school vision and priorities were clearly understood by all members of the school community.

...judicious selection of data was used to inform planning and evaluate impact.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- The academic curriculum is broad and highly ambitious and effective quality assurance systems promotes its consistency of implementation. 53% of students entered the Ebacc in 2024.
- The Personal, Social, Health and Educational (PSHE) curriculum is well planned as a spiral curriculum, age appropriate and valued by students. Staff say that the move of tutor time from the start to the middle of the day has been effective in focusing students. Heads of Year take their role seriously saying, 'Your specialist subject is the students.'
- Opportunities for students extend well beyond the classroom. The extracurricular offer is wide ranging from bouldering to LGBTI+ group. The aim is inclusive; for all students to be involved and feel part of the 'Batch Team.' This inclusive agenda is furthered by funding from Sport England for girls' basketball and rugby teams and whole school days such as World Afro Day. All staff have received training on unconscious bias and stakeholders support the Black Anti Racist Community Group (BARC) who meet every half term to tackle any discrimination. Students, especially boys, who may be struggling with their own identity receive mentoring from 'Global Majority' and year 10 girls from the 'Girls' Network.'
- Students in alternative provision receive mentoring and a bespoke timetable ranging from two lessons a week to a full timetable of lessons within the provision. The school ensures that all students who access the provision are on a pathway to support them back into their mainstream lessons.
- Students review their own progress in Review and Planning time at Key Stage 3. Planned assessment informs department curriculum adaptations and student self-review in form time which builds engagement and character development. A pilot reporting system where students are shown their GCSE equivalent is showing early signs of impact on students' engagement and aiding them to see the real purpose of assessment.
- Continuous professional development is comprehensive and has been carefully aligned with quality assurance and performance management to drive school improvement. It has been devised with high challenge and low threat. Staff training has focused on disciplinary literacy building on tier 2 and 3 vocabulary the previous year. This is quality assured through paired observations, Learning and Research Coaches and teacher Walkthrus. Department leads discuss their school improvement plan with governors each year and the half termly Blatch Teaching and Learning Newsletter promotes good practice.

- An effective literacy strategy which includes timetabled library lessons and a tutor reading programme plus the use of reading interventions has resulted in students in Years 7 and 8 making an average increase in reading age of one year and average increase in fluency of two years over the academic year. The school is also leading on a youth oracy project. 'Speak Out Challenge' across Brighton and Hove schools.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and model effectively. For example, in a year 10 science lesson on stoichiometry, students successfully recalled prior learning on mole equations through the 'Do Now' activity and after expert modelling were able to apply the methodology to solve equations as a group prior to working independently.
- In 2024 Key Stage 4 outcomes improved with standard and strong GCSE pass percentages above national average and the highest ever achieved. In addition, Progress 8 and Attainment increased to above the national average.

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

- ... lesson activities ensured that all students are clear about the purpose of their learning.
- ... teachers actively used a range of assessment for learning strategies to systematically check students' understanding.

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

- In the classroom teachers adapt the learning for SEND and DA students and prioritise their learning such as the three SEND/DA book check at the end of every lesson. The primary aim, however, is for all students to make progress through quality first teaching, setting high expectations for all. An example of this was seen in a Year 8 history lesson on Cromwell where effective questioning effectively checked DA/SEND understanding and chunking was used to enable these students to effectively access key dates in the source writing enabling progress to be in line with others.

- Students with additional needs and those disadvantaged are clearly identified. Carousel training at the start of the year allows staff to gain a greater understanding of students with additional needs and strategies for specific learning needs. Governors have also had SEND training. Interventions are carefully planned and triaging from weekly focused meetings prompts tailored interventions such as sensory breaks, family learning days and handwriting.
- SEND learning walks have served to inform curriculum adaptation, individual staff supported and improved outcomes. In addition, a separate reporting system for EHCP students based on their specific needs has enabled greater alignment in planning and teaching and clarity when reporting progress to parents.
- Pupil profiles for SEND and other information is available on Edukey and the school is further refining collation of information so that it is centralised and easily accessible. In addition, teachers' seating plans identify vulnerable groups, informing any issues which may affect their learning.
- Effective outreach support is utilised for students with additional needs through Speech and Language therapy (SaLT) and Occupational Therapy (OT) and an inhouse EAL tutor.
- An inclusive ethos permeates the provision. DA students have targeted funding for trips and at Key Stage 3 all food is provided for Food Technology lessons. Students benefit from the supportive culture and opportunities to pursue suitable curriculum pathways, especially in relation to the creative subjects. The school recognises the importance of continuing to engage parents to build rapport between school and home.
- All disadvantaged students are carefully tracked and monitored and given individual support targeted to breaking down barriers to learning. They are prioritised, along with students with additional needs, with regard to support for their next steps with applications and college visits. There are high aspirations for these students and success at gaining places for entry level study at further education colleges.
- Although evidence with regard to value added outcomes for both disadvantaged students and those with additional needs shows it to be below the national average, the gap between the disadvantaged and others nationally is narrowing and SEND outcomes improving.

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

... teachers utilised student profiles to more effectively inform and plan actions in the classroom.

... teachers have the highest level of expectations for all students, especially DA.

5. Area of Excellence

Leadership of Initial Teacher Education and Early Career teaching

Accredited

5.1 Why has this area been identified as a strength? What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

Blatchington Mill School has developed an innovative, comprehensive, high-quality, research-informed, compliant and ambitious Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision. This program prepares student trainee teachers for all aspects of their careers. The school has implemented strategic development, innovative practices, high-quality quality assurance processes and ambitious criteria for mentor selection. The program is research-informed and supportive, ensuring that student teachers and Early Career Teachers (ECTs) are exceptionally well-prepared for the demands of the profession.

The key strengths of the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision at Blatchington Mill School include comprehensive and compliant strategic development. The school responds to and manages changes within early career provision, such as the DfE reforms to ITE 2024, ensuring readiness for new requirements. Innovation is at the heart of the provision, with the development of Intensive Training and Practice (ITAP) workbooks and processes to support Initial Teacher Training (ITTs), including a specific absence process and morning check-ins with mentors.

The professional tutor, Bonnie Hall, plays a pivotal role in the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision at Blatchington Mill School. She is responsible for designing and implementing professional development programs by sequencing, facilitating, and evaluating research-informed and compliant training for student teachers. She oversees quality assurance processes, developing and implementing

monitoring systems to support mentors and ITTs through tools like PebblePad, as well as conducting learning walks and phase assessments. The ITT programme represents strong practice which links university learning to practice and school context, policy and improvement priorities. The programme is sustainable with demonstrable impact. The robust structures and wide team that deliver on the programme mean that it can be effectively sustained over a three-year period should the leadership change.

5.2 What evidence is there of the impact on students' outcomes?

Feedback evidence for participants is very positive and the impact on student outcomes, although hard to quantify, has been less direct but pertinent in that quality teachers produced are benefiting Blatchington Mill and beyond. Many ECTs, once qualified at Blatchington, have impacted positively on pupil outcomes, for example in Geography one teacher achieved the top results within the department and one has become a Key Stage 3 Co-ordinator, and others are Teaching and Research coaches.

The school's approach has led to a 100% completion rate for participants and has positively impacted the recruitment and retention of teachers, leading to impact on outcomes in the classroom. The culture of welcoming and celebrating ITTs has led to a positive impact on recruitment and retention, with high retention rates and successful recruitment of teachers trained through the ITE provision.

The professional tutor also engages in strategic planning and compliance, ensuring the school's ITE provision aligns with national and local changes such as DfE reforms. Her collaboration and external engagement extend to governance committees at university ITE providers, contributions to policy and strategic planning, and participation in Ofsted inspections. She actively shares her expertise with other professional tutors and schools, helping to maintain consistency and quality in ITE provision across the partnership.

The lead also supports Early Career Teachers (ECTs) through strategic planning and implementation, conducting SWOT analyses and proposing staffing structure changes to align with DfE reforms for ECT induction. She oversees a unique mentoring structure where mentors are Teaching and Research Coaches (TRCs) outside of the ECT's subject specialism, allowing for a clear distinction between mentoring and evaluation while providing diverse feedback.



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5.3 What is the name, job title and email address of the staff lead in this area?

Bonnie Hall
ITT Professional tutor and ECT Coordinator
bhall@blatchingtonmill.org.uk

Brandon Hughes
Deputy Headteacher
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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.

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>)