



## VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

### REVIEW REPORT FOR THE GROVE SCHOOL

<b>Name of School:</b>	The Grove School
<b>Headteacher:</b>	Lucia Santi
<b>Hub:</b>	London Special and AP
<b>School phase:</b>	Special all through 5-19
<b>MAT:</b>	Heartlands Community Trust

<b>Date of this Review:</b>	08/02/2021
<b>Date of last QA Review</b>	This is the school's first review
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	None - this is a new school.

#### 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>	Not applicable
<b>School Improvement Strategies</b>	Not applicable
<b>Approach to recovery and remote learning</b>	Not applicable
<b>Area of Excellence</b>	Not applicable
<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate</b>	Not applicable

*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.*

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

The Grove provides for 92 pupils within the age range 5-19 with a primary diagnosis of autism. It opened in 2018 as a free school and is already over-subscribed. All pupils have an Education and Health Care Plan. Nearly all pupils are working significantly lower than their age expectations, with the large majority greater than five years below their chronological age.

Over 90% of the school population is from Haringey, representing a wide range of social and economic backgrounds with over 30 ethnic groups in the school. Nearly a third are of Black African heritage- the largest group in the school. The disadvantaged group makes up 37% of the school population. About a quarter have English as an additional language. Attendance for 2019 - 20 was 90%. All pupils returned to school in September 2020; from January 2021, approximately 35% of pupils are attending on-site schooling while 65% access remote learning at home.

As a new school, it has not yet been inspected and its previous Challenge Partner Review was cancelled. The school was awarded Advanced Autism Accreditation in January 2021. The Grove sits in The Heartlands Community Trust with one other school.

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

- As a new school, The Grove has developed an inspiring sense of a shared and ambitious vision to Inspire Excellence, Champion Potential and Empower Learning. This vision is central to the thorough induction programme that all staff go through as the number of pupils grows.
- The culture, clearly articulated by the leaders, is to achieve excellence through a constant drive for improvement. This ambition is shared throughout the school. Leaders have built a strong sense of community and belonging in the short space of time since the school opened.
- Productive relationships have been established with a wide range of organisations beyond the school including the Institute of Education and University College London.
- This is an outward facing school that has achieved significant external accreditations such as the Gold Award from the anti-bullying alliance. It is also committed to working collaboratively with other schools. For example, the deputy headteacher leads an assessment group of Haringey Special schools that moderate each other's judgments about pupil progress. Leaders plan to expand the developing role of providing bespoke training to schools locally, for example on an approach called positive behaviour strategies (PBS).
- The curriculum has been built from scratch and is tailored to meet the needs of the pupils. It comprises different pathways that cater for the wide range of ability levels of the pupils from pre-key stage standard 1 to GCSE. It continues to evolve as the school grows, adapting to the needs of pupils. The school is rightly proud of this confidence to innovate. This innovation is at the heart of their best practice in curriculum development and assessment.

- Leaders at all levels are able to articulate the aims of the curriculum. While there are opportunities for pupils to study individual subjects, it is structured to meet the holistic needs of pupils. Developing pupils' communication skills is central. The school has a very impressive range of approaches, and training for the whole school community has been, and continues to be, provided.
- The school has an ambitious approach to careers development which is linked to the Gatsby Benchmarks including, for example, work opportunities in the kitchens of the sister school. Unfortunately, this programme has been temporarily stopped due to restrictions imposed by the pandemic.
- The heads of department have a good and growing overview of the strengths and areas for development of their respective areas. They work well together and take up the professional development opportunities offered to them including the National Professional Qualification for Senior Leaders. Because they themselves teach, they are well placed to support their colleagues effectively. They track pupils' progress thoroughly and, as result, are able to make adjustments rapidly to address any pupil underachievement.
- Subject leaders for mathematics and English were appointed just before the first lockdown. They have a sound understanding of what is needed to improve the provision in their respective areas and are developing the confidence to help drive improvement.

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

...school leaders refined a more consistent approach to the use of communication tools across the school community, fostering reciprocal communication, especially to help pupils manage their social, emotional and mental health needs.

... leaders further developed the identification and analysis of the progress made by groups based on their different learning needs.

## **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 produced excellent documents that capture a detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of the school's work. Actions derived from this analysis are then moulded into a comprehensive action plan with clear intended outcomes and deadlines. Leaders at all levels are aware of the priorities that have been identified because they have helped to shape them.
- Leaders are resolutely focused on the impact of their work. They keep pupils' needs central to their thinking, in particular the drive to provide pupils with the tools they need to live independent lives. This underpins the school's focus, for example, on providing a wide range of communication aids that support functional language.

- Monitoring and quality assurance procedures are thorough. Necessary actions are identified and followed through. The two formal observations of teaching per year are supplemented with a range of strategies to encourage and facilitate collaboration and peer professional development. For example, there is an open-door week where staff are encouraged to pop into each other's classrooms to observe and learn. As a result, the staff have developed their skills for example in teaching phonics and making learning intentions clear.
- The professional development programme is impressive. Leaders systematically focus on growing the skills of the whole staff team. Staff find it motivating. They welcome constructive feedback and the encouragement to reflect on and refine their teaching practice, particularly in cutting edge practice in meeting the needs of autistic pupils.
- Teachers play an active role in curriculum development, working collaboratively with subject leaders to ensure learning is meaningful and best meets the learning needs of their pupils.
- Support staff are encouraged by teachers to develop their confidence and skills to deliver interventions and to actively contribute to discussions around how to best meet pupils' learning needs. For example all staff are involved in a drive to use reading records and a focus on essential and specific vocabulary.
- The school has established very good provision for staff wellbeing with leaders mindful of workload and stress levels. The weekly questionnaires indicate a high level of confidence in leaders' ability to keep them safe. 95% recently indicated that they were not concerned about returning to work. This reflects the strong sense of family and community that is a strength of this new school.
- The multi disciplinary team with a wide range of therapists from different disciplines has a clear vision of its role. The team works with pupils directly, trains staff as well working collaboratively with teachers to deliver learning. This exemplifies the school's holistic approach to learning.
- Staff use the language of pupil wellbeing rather than talking about pupil behaviour. Staff report that this culture is embedded: staff focus on strategies to enable readiness for learning and self regulation.

### **3.2 School improvement strategies - Even better if...**

...teachers further developed their leadership skills so that all staff in their teams are clear and confident in their respective roles.

...the written feedback of pupils' work made the next steps in sequential learning more explicit, particularly for the more able pupils.

...leaders continued to focus on the skills of teaching mathematics so that outcomes are stronger.

### **4.1 Approach to recovery and remote learning - What went well**

- The school has adopted a flexible and compassionate approach to managing learning during the pandemic. About a third of pupils are now on site with two thirds learning at home. This proportion is broadly consistent across all the phases in the school.

- Contact with parents has been very regular, by phone and by sending physical packs of work home. Sensitive thought has been given to accommodating the needs of individual homes where technology or space may be less available.
- Some parents have wanted more and some wanted less work sent to them. Staff have worked hard to ensure that, wherever possible, the level of challenge for pupils remains consistent across home and school learning. Leaders report that staff now have a greater understanding of each other's roles.
- The school leaders are already looking at what they have learnt from the closures. Both staff and pupils have learnt, for example, the need to be more flexible as they may work in different classes with different peers. For new staff this has provided an opportunity for greater collaborative teaching.
- Leaders are contemplating retaining some of these collaborative approaches. Parents report a greater awareness of their child's learning needs and progress. Plans are in place to maintain this by, for example, providing access through IRIS, a tool for recording classroom practice for reflection and improvement purposes. Leaders are also aware that when pupils return to school, there will need to be a period of time and adjustment where staff focus particularly on pupils' social skills.

#### **4.2 Approach to recovery and remote learning - Even better if...**

...the school further developed its blended approach to learning as the balance of onsite and remote learning shifts with the pupils' anticipated phased return to school.

...the school captured, with a view to retaining, some of the unintended positive elements from the lockdowns such as greater cross-departmental working for both pupils and staff.

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

The school has a number of potential areas of excellent practice, for example in curriculum development, assessment and promoting pupil wellbeing. As a school that is new to Challenge Partners, it has chosen not to put one forward at this stage but may well do so in the future.

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

The school is an active member of the London special hub through which it will continue to access support as needed.

**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.**



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**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.**