QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR THE GROVE SCHOOL

Name of School:	The Grove School
Headteacher:	Lucia Santi
Hub:	London Special & AP Hub
School phase:	Special – All through
MAT (if applicable):	The SEARCH Education Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Not Applicable (N/A)
Date of this Review:	13/05/2026
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	N/A
Date of last QA Review:	14/05/2025
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	28/02/2023

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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 N/A

Quality of provision and outcomes AND Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with additional needs N/A N/A

Area of excellence N/A

Previously accredited valid areas of excellence

Overall peer evaluation estimate N/A

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.

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1. Context and character of the school

The Grove School is an all-through (5-19) special school which opened as a free school in 2018. It is one of two schools in the SEARCH Educational Trust. Located in the London Borough of Haringey, the school is part of the borough's local authority SEND offer, with only a small minority of the 160 pupils* on roll coming from other London boroughs.

All pupils attending the school have a primary diagnosis of autism and additional learning difficulties or co-occurring diagnoses, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), speech, language and communication needs, as well as social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) barriers to learning. Every student has an education, health and care plan (EHCP). The school also has a higher-than-average number of disadvantaged pupils. Pupils represent a broad range of ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is in line with the national average.

The school's vision is founded on a desire to make a difference and change lives for the better through inspiring excellence, championing potential and empowering learning. This is underpinned by the school-wide SEARCH values of support, empathy, acceptance, resilience, compassion and honesty.

**For this report, all learners, regardless of their age or stage, will be referred to as pupils.*

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Leaders and governors maintain a clear vision centred on improving pupils' life chances, high aspirations and preparation for adulthood. This vision drives strategic planning, staff development and a strong culture of accountability and support. For example, governors regularly challenge leaders through monitoring visits and accountability meetings.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team demonstrate relentless drive and ambition in continually refining provision, developing staff expertise and improving outcomes for pupils across the school. Leaders maintain a reflective culture where systems, curriculum and practice are regularly reviewed to ensure that they meet the changing needs of pupils and staff. For example, leaders have established curriculum development teams, coaching programmes and working parties to refine areas such as life skills provision, while also introducing AI-focused training and efficiency systems to improve

both teaching quality and staff workload.

- Faculty and pathway leaders contribute effectively to curriculum development and quality assurance, resulting in greater teaching consistency and improved staff confidence. Leadership development is well established, enabling staff to progress into leadership roles through coaching and mentoring. For example, a member of staff who initially joined as an agency teaching assistant later became a faculty lead for Key Stages 1 and 2.
- The climate for learning is calm, purposeful and aspirational, with strong relationships supporting pupils' engagement, confidence and readiness to learn. Staff understand pupils well and create environments where they feel safe and supported. For example, pupils were excited to participate with visitors in a Rock Steady music session.
- Curriculum enrichment is carefully planned to broaden pupils' experiences, cultural understanding and independence through visits, outdoor learning and specialist activities. Enrichment opportunities are linked closely to curriculum intent and personal development. For instance, most pupils take up the opportunity to participate in Forest School sessions.
- Participation in extra-curricular and enrichment activities is strong because leaders remove barriers and provide varied opportunities that reflect pupils' interests and needs. Pupils benefit from experiences that many may not otherwise access. For example, pupils took part in horse riding, circus skills and bike riding activities funded through planned curriculum enrichment.
- Personal development provision strengthens pupils' confidence, independence and resilience through leadership opportunities, life skills and preparation for adulthood. Pupils learn to communicate effectively, contribute to school life and develop advocacy and self-esteem. For example, student council members confidently explained how their feedback had influenced playground equipment and school menus.
- Pupils develop an understanding of their role in modern Britain through experiences that promote diversity, inclusion, safety and respect for others. The curriculum supports pupils to engage positively with the wider community and different cultures. For example, pupils participated in visits to places such as mosques and galleries to extend cultural understanding and real-world learning.

2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if…

… leaders embedded a school-wide approach to support the leadership of effective teams.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

● The curriculum is ambitious, well-matched to pupils' needs and enables all learners to access meaningful learning through differentiated pathways, practical experiences and adult support. Pupils apply learning to real-life contexts and develop independence through vocational and community experiences. For example, post-16 pupils planned and prepared meals for peers while taking responsibility for kitchen roles.

● Curriculum planning is rigorous, coherent and very well sequenced, with leaders and staff working collaboratively to ensure that learning builds over time. Teachers revisit prior knowledge, so that pupils deepen understanding across subjects and pathways. For instance, pupils linked earlier learning about volcanoes in science to life on a volcanic island in geography.

● Reading and phonics provision is structured and adapted effectively to meet pupils' needs. Visuals, routines and swift correction of misconceptions support engagement and progress. For example, a pupil corrected the confusion between "dog" and "dig" following teacher prompting.

● Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge and engage positively with coaching and professional dialogue to strengthen practice. Leaders provide tailored support and professional development to improve teaching quality. For example, coaching supported teachers' effective use of mini whiteboards to improve pupil engagement and feedback.

● Teachers consistently use total communication approaches, including visuals, modelling, symbols, repetition and core boards, to develop speaking, listening, reading and writing. This enables pupils with a wide range of communication needs to participate fully. For example, pupils used core boards in geography to communicate vocabulary linked to earthquakes.

● Pupils recall prior learning and apply knowledge across contexts because teaching builds incrementally and regularly revisits concepts. Teachers check understanding through questioning, modelling and live feedback. For example, pupils in English were supported to connect their experiences of being brave with those of Oliver Twist.

● Teaching materials are purposeful, engaging and adapted to meet sensory, communication and cognitive needs. Practical resources help pupils to understand abstract concepts and remain motivated. For example, in the Engagement class, a range of items and images were used to explore key colours.

● Learning is ambitious and appropriately demanding across pathways, with scaffolded support enabling pupils to access challenging content. Teachers maintain high expectations while adapting tasks to starting points. For example, Key Stage 3 pupils explored unseen friction forces through practical investigations.

● Across pathways and key stages, pupils develop knowledge, skills and understanding securely through sequenced learning and adaptive teaching.

Pupils show increasing confidence and engagement. For example, post-16 pupils independently planned travel routes during travel training.

- The curriculum prepares pupils effectively for the next stage of education and adult life through a focus on independence, employability and life skills. Pupils experience meaningful vocational opportunities and learn appropriate communication in different settings. For example, students demonstrated professional conduct by warning others about the movement of hot liquids in the kitchen.

- Leaders use tracking, monitoring and quality assurance systems effectively to identify trends, evaluate provision and support pupil progress, including behaviour and preparation for qualifications where appropriate. Staff use assessment and live feedback to adapt teaching and reinforce learning. For example, detailed behaviour tracking enabled staff to identify triggers and reduce incidents.
- Relationships across the school are positive and respectful, creating a calm culture for learning. Staff understand pupils' needs well, enabling them to feel safe, confident and engaged. For instance, a pupil responded appropriately to the newly introduced break cards and visual timers to regulate lesson attendance and facilitate a return to learning.
- Attendance and engagement are supported through proactive strategies that address barriers to learning and emotional regulation. Leaders and staff use personalised approaches and planned interventions to reduce absence and improve readiness for learning. For example, a pupil attending part-time returned more calmly and with fewer behaviour incidents because of carefully planned reintegration strategies.

3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if…

… engagement was meaningfully maximised through personalised resources and adaptations to the delivery of the Secondary Pathway One curriculum.

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

- Leaders are committed to ensuring that teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) work cohesively as a team so that support is responsive, purposeful and closely matched to pupils' learning and regulation needs. Adults communicate effectively and adapt their support to promote engagement and independence during lessons. For example, in a Key Stage 3 science lesson on waves, staff discreetly checked pupils' understanding, praised success and redirected attention quietly so learning continued without

disruption.

- Leaders invest in the induction, training and professional development of LSAs through bespoke and whole-school professional learning. This ensures that support staff understand effective classroom practice and contribute confidently to pupils' progress and well-being. For example, LSAs attended whole-school training alongside teachers, so approaches to pedagogy and classroom support were consistently applied across lessons.
- Therapeutic approaches are integrated effectively throughout the school to support pupils' EHCP outcomes, emotional regulation and readiness to learn. Leaders ensure that pastoral, behavioural and mental health support work together to provide personalised interventions and reduce barriers to learning. For example, staff identified that one pupil became dysregulated following therapy sessions, leading to the introduction of a low-demand sensory-based start to the day, which reduced incidents and improved engagement.
- Leaders strengthen parental engagement through effective communication with families, personalised support and purposeful partnerships that enhance learning opportunities. Staff adapt communication methods to meet families' differing needs and encourage parental involvement. For example, leaders used attendance meetings and a range of regular communication strategies to improve support and engagement for a pupil and family requiring additional help.
- Provision for well-being is proactive and integrated across attendance, pastoral and mental health systems, ensuring that pupils receive timely and coordinated support. Leaders use personalised interventions to improve engagement and emotional regulation. For example, a pupil with emotionally based school avoidance successfully engaged in online learning and regular check-ins with senior leaders.

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

… N/A.

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 content reports from across the partnership of schools and trusts 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 partnership 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)