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**CHALLENGE PARTNERS: Quality Assurance Review Written Report**

<b>Name of School:</b>	Pickhurst Junior Academy
<b>School Address:</b>	Pickhurst Lane, West Wickham, BR4 OHL
<b>Hub School:</b>	Pickhurst

<b>Telephone Number:</b>	0208 8462 5867
<b>Email address:</b>	office@pickhurst.com

<b>Unique Reference Number:</b>	101599
<b>Local Authority:</b>	Bromley
<b>Type of School:</b>	Academy
<b>School Category:</b>	Junior
<b>Age range of pupils:</b>	7-11
<b>Number on roll:</b>	510
<b>Head teacher/Principal:</b>	CEO – Matt Rampton Principal – Lynne Dando

<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	4 – 5 July 2011
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	Outstanding

<b>Date of Quality Assurance Review:</b>	2 – 4 November 2016
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## **QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW – SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES<sup>1</sup>**

**School Improvement Strategies:** Outstanding

**Outcomes for Pupils:** Outstanding

**Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:** Outstanding

**Area of Excellence:** Confirmed and valid for 3 years

**Differentiation in mathematics: fluid groupings that support and challenge every pupil.**

**Previously accredited Areas of Excellence:**

**Forest School.**

### **Overall Review Evaluation**

The Quality Assurance Review found indicators that Pickhurst Junior Academy appears to be firmly within the Outstanding grade as judged by Ofsted in the school's previous Ofsted report.

1. Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.

## **Information about the school**

- Pickhurst Junior Academy is a four-form entry, larger than average junior school.
- The school became part of the Chancery Trust in April 2016. The previous umbrella trust (Ignite) formed in in 2014 still exists, involving Darrick Wood, Burnt Ash and Oaklands schools.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The number of boys and girls is broadly equal.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national average. There are no pupils with a SEND statement or Education Health Care Plan currently at the school.
- Information from the school indicates that the demographic picture of the school population is changing, as the number of higher income families has now almost halved over the last few years.

## **School Improvement Strategies**

### **What Went Well**

- Senior leaders at Pickhurst are an inspirational team who exude passion, lead by example and have the highest possible expectations and ambitions for both pupils and staff alike. They constantly review and refine their actions, effectively using the network of other schools available to them. Thus there is a culture of trust that both encourages and enables everyone to succeed. Frequent 'temperature checks' taken from all groups of stakeholders are an integral part of the self-evaluation process at Pickhurst. The resulting information and feedback are swiftly acted upon to ensure that the necessary improvements happen.
- The Principal of Pickhurst Junior Academy is providing part-time support to the other school in the Chancery Trust because the school is in challenging circumstances. This is building strong leadership capacity at Pickhurst, as the three very capable assistant head teachers (AHTs) confidently take charge at Pickhurst when the Principal is off site. This succession planning provides valuable opportunities for the AHTs to act as Principal. They report that they have the autonomy to lead, yet support is forthcoming when needed. Effective communication maintains this high quality. 'We keep the motivation and momentum going through temperature checks.' An example of this strategy is the recent staff breakfast where all staff shared WWWs and EBIs

experienced during the term so far. The WWWs served as affirmation and cause for celebration and the EBIs have already been acted upon.

- The school's rigorous self-evaluation system is based on the 'Cycle of 7' which is implemented every term, focusing on SDP/SEF update, assessment, moderation, pupil progress reviews, intervention and pastoral care planning, appraisal and reporting to parents. This frequent, forensic evaluation ensures that professional dialogue concentrates on what matters. Development planning reflects accurate actions and the robust monitoring system measures the impact of actions. All leaders are linked to a group of subject leaders and a particular year group. This creates an in-depth knowledge base through a wide range of activities such as frequent drop-ins that secure improvements through identifying important WWWs and EBIs.
- Formal monitoring is also the responsibility of subject leaders and phase leaders. Phase leaders are new posts this academic year and they provide support for the teachers in their phase such as assisting with work scrutiny, marking and team teaching. Discussions with phase leaders during the review demonstrated their high expectations of pupils' achievement. Frequent pupil progress meetings involve both teachers and support staff and reflect a forensic approach.
- Phase and subject leaders constantly reflect on and discuss the way they teach to identify the strategies that have the best impact on pupils' progress and wellbeing. Daily conversations about learning result in a culture of openness and sharing.
- Systems and structures are firmly in place and consistently applied across the school. This results in everyone knowing exactly what is expected of them.
- Inclusivity is a real strength of the school. Pupils with complex and challenging needs do not stand out, taking an active part in lessons and being fully engaged in their learning.
- The passion and enthusiasm of the new science leader is reflected in the science action plan. The pace of the implementation of the plan is rapid, as a great deal has already been achieved this term. Talking leads to actions and staff are buoyed by the exciting developments in science. The impact of cross-curricular links through science is becoming evident in many subjects, as the well-taught skills of investigation, prediction and enquiry transfer seamlessly across the curriculum.
- The International Primary Curriculum provides an exciting, enquiry based, creative, thematic approach to learning.
- Robust performance management that both encourages and supports improvement informs the professional development of all staff. Appraisals focus on attainment and progress every half term. Attainment targets are aspirational at 95% to achieve expected, 45% to achieve greater depth.

Progress targets are six steps a year. Leaders are confident that these targets are achievable. They are determined that targets reflect ambitious and aspirational outcomes due to the high starting points in Year 3.

- The academy runs a series of programmes through the Ignite group of schools, including NQT, NQT + one, middle leaders and middle leaders + one.
- Para professionals and higher level teaching assistants receive bespoke training and have their own professional development targets. Para professionals at Pickhurst run the outstanding teaching assistant course and all support staff have received this training. Teaching assistants are often seen working confidently with the higher ability pupils as well as the less able.
- Resilience and mental well-being are monitored and formally recorded every term to ensure that pupils are stable and mentally ready to learn.
- The quality of communication with parents goes above and beyond what would be considered typical. As pupils are set according to ability, termly parents' evenings involve joint discussions with the form teacher, maths teacher and literacy teacher. Parents receive written reports every term as well as helpful information about how they can support their children's learning at home.

### **Even Better If...**

... the SEF and the SDP were more closely cross-referenced to ensure more obvious alignment.

### **Pupil Outcomes**

- In order to establish secure starting points on entry to Year 3, the school baselines pupils using specific tests within two weeks of arrival, after they have settled in. This is used to measure progress year on year.
- In 2016 79% of Year 6 pupils achieved the expected level of combined reading, writing and mathematics.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2016 was above the national average in all subjects, with mathematics being significantly above national at 25%.
- Progress in reading, mathematics and writing is significantly above national.
- Girls outperformed boys in writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS) but boys performed slightly better in mathematics.
- There were 22 Year 6 pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium Grant, fourteen of whom reached the expected standard in all subjects. These pupils performed better than their peers nationally although there is an in-school difference that the school is diminishing.

- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is lower than national and 40% of SEN pupils achieved the expected level, demonstrating good progress.
- Phonics is taught systematically for those pupils who need it.
- Writing is a priority for the school because writing at greater depth targets were over cautious last year. Thus the school has increased this target this year.
- The percentage of pupils targeted to achieve expected GPS this year is 88%, showing a rise in expectations.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **What Went Well**

- Positive relationships at all levels result in a culture of trust where everyone feels valued. The climate for learning is one of excitement and curiosity. The positive, outward-looking ethos permeates the whole school.
- A culture of risk-taking and learning from mistakes applies to both pupils and teachers. This enables the most able pupils to be challenged and to challenge themselves. Hence, pupils thrive at Pickhurst.
- The calm, orderly learning environment supports learning very well, with pupils independently accessing resources such as working walls and tool kits.
- Pupils are really proud of their school. They are very articulate and make impressive ambassadors for the school. Pupils have a secure understanding of the purpose of marking. 'Marking helps me get better.' Next step marking enhances pupils' understanding and results in significant improvements to their work.
- Pupils are openly delighted with the new approach to teaching mathematics and articulated the impact on their self-esteem and enthusiasm for mathematics, as well as their understanding and progress. One Year 6 girl in the lower set said, 'Maths is my favourite subject now. It didn't used to be, but since last year, I've learned that I'm quite good at it. If I don't get it, it's just that I don't get it at the time, not forever. The answer station helps me to know where I've gone wrong straight away.'
- Lower sets receive very high quality teaching because teachers are highly skilled and have excellent subject knowledge. They understand how young children learn best and constantly reflect on and refine their teaching strategies to meet the changing needs of pupils. For example, making real smoothies after solving problems related to mathematical scale.
- High levels of engagement and excitement are the result of meticulous planning that matches the needs of every pupil.

- An appropriate pace meets the needs of all abilities and results in pupils making excellent progress in most lessons.
- Some of the best examples of teachers facilitating learning as opposed to controlling learning were seen during this review. Where this was most successful, pupils demonstrated independence, resilience and curiosity, displaying confident ownership of their learning. Pupils' self-awareness and understanding of their own learning is mature and sophisticated. Hence, learning flows, enabling impressive progress to be made. Thus behaviour for learning is outstanding.
- Questioning is layered and targeted to meet the needs of all ability levels so that all pupils can access learning. Inter-active strategies such as Learning Partners are beginning to be established, although there is more work to be done in order for this strategy to impact fully on learning.
- Progress is evident through 'cold to hot' assessment tasks. High quality examples of extended writing across the curriculum are evident, particularly in IPC and science. For example, a letter to Mr Rampton about the theory of evolution written in the role of Charles Darwin showed maturity, pride and excellent presentation.
- Teachers successfully address misconceptions in a timely manner in order to clarify understanding. In the most effective lessons, teachers only interrupt the class when absolutely necessary, which continues the flow of learning rather than disrupts it.

#### **Even Better If...**

... a consistent structure was established for Learning Partners.

#### **Quality of Area of Excellence**

##### **Differentiation in mathematics: fluid groupings that support and challenge every pupil.**

(Three levels of difficulty – Pythagoras, Newton, Euler.)

#### **Why has this area been identified as a strength?**

The school decided to move away from fixed groupings and 'forced/rigid' groups in mathematics lessons in order to give pupils greater ownership of their learning so that they could achieve more. So the new approach involves the levels entitled Pythagoras, Newton & Euler, and the use of assessment 'questions and answer stations' to enable pupils to select the best starting point for them. This enables pupils to know if they are making mistakes or if they are doing well enough to move onto the next, more challenging activity.

Staff and pupils, as evidenced in recent questionnaires, have welcomed the new approach, and so the ethos towards differentiation in mathematics has been totally transformed across the school. The new approach offers pupils an assessment question during the lesson, used as a decider for which challenge/activity they will start on in that lesson. This has meant that the groupings are fluid and activities are meeting the needs of the pupils within each lesson. If a pupil finds the assessment question too difficult or too challenging, they will then complete the more supportive activity. If pupils understand and complete the assessment question successfully, they start at Newton's challenge (set at the year group's expected standard) with a further challenge available to them if they need it later during the lesson. The class groupings obviously change daily to meet each pupil's individual needs.

Additionally, pupils use an answer station at regular intervals to check their understanding. The expectation is that when pupils mark their work, they will then decide whether they need support from the teacher to correct their work/address their misconceptions, or move onto the next more challenging activity.

#### **What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?**

The subject leader for mathematics has attended several INSET courses and conferences in relation to differentiation and building pupils' self-esteem. For example, the Rising Stars Assessment Conference in 2015 provided several practical ideas on assessment. This has been disseminated to all staff. The new approach has evolved into its current form after several different trials. The mathematics leader used his class and his year-group to pilot the different stages since September 2015, and found the current approach to be the most practical and beneficial. In the early stages, pupils freely selected their own activity but this meant some chose a task that was far too challenging or some chose a task that was too easy. Research, together with professional conversations with other teachers and leaders, prompted further refinement such as including an assessment question/point into the lesson before pupils chose their main task. The names of the groupings were chosen because each one is a famous mathematician and every group name sounds 'important' and valued to the pupils. The lower-attaining pupils who may start on the Pythagoras task still feel valued as they feel they have achieved something, rather than just being in a coloured/shaped group.

The mathematics leader has worked closely with the staff at another school in the Trust, in particular the Year 6 team, to provide support with planning, resources and managing the differentiation to ensure that all pupils, including the lower-attaining children, are challenged and supported to achieve the expected standard. Additionally, as part of Pickhurst's NQT development programme, groups of NQTs

observed several teachers at Pickhurst. The NQTs reported how well the structure worked and how resilient and determined the pupils were to improve and challenge themselves through the lessons.

**What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?**

The school has found that this new approach to differentiation and challenge has given pupils a greater sense of independence and control, thus developing resilience and confidence. It has also raised the self-esteem of lower-attaining pupils as it has made them realise that they are not always 'stuck' in the lowest group for each lesson; they have the power and freedom to start or move onto a more challenging activity if they are working well on a topic. In addition, more able pupils working in the higher sets said that they feel more challenged as, after checking their work at the answer stations, they can independently move themselves onto a more complex activity that stretches their reasoning and problem solving skills.

As a result of training from the inspirational mathematics leader, the CPD of both teachers and support staff has been enhanced. Their subject knowledge is more secure and they feel more confident in the classroom. The end of 2016 Key Stage 2 SATs data shows that 95% of the cohort achieved the expected standard in maths, which was well-above national average and mathematics was the school's strongest subject area. This demonstrates the impact of this strategy being used since the beginning of academic year 2015-2016.

Parents have also benefitted from this work as their knowledge and understanding of how mathematics is taught has increased.

**What is the name and email address of the staff lead in this area?**

Dan Siggs daniel.siggs@pickhurst.com

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

Following discussion with the headteacher, the school would like some additional support with...

Learning Partners – a visit to a reviewer's school in Dorset.

Any research or materials about Learning Partners.

Phonics at KS2.

**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.**