



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR CHARLES DICKENS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of School:	Charles Dickens Primary School
Headteacher/Principal:	Michael Eggleton
Hub:	Charter School Educational Trust Hub
School phase:	Primary
MAT (if applicable):	Charter Schools Educational Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	15/01/2024
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Leading
Date of last QA Review	21/11/2022
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	24/09/2019

1. Context and character of the school

Charles Dicken's Primary School (CDPS), is a two-form entry primary school, located in the London borough of Southwark. The headteacher, having been part of the senior leadership team since 2014, became headteacher in September 2021 when the previous headteacher took up the position of CEO at the newly created Charter Schools Educational Trust. CDPS was the first primary school to join the trust, which is currently made up of three secondary schools and five primaries. Tiny Tim provision offers a flexible Nursery offer for two-year-olds, with Trotwood offering up to 40 places for children aged three to four. Twice weekly stay and play sessions are also offered for children under two and their parents or carers. The limited school site is creatively maximised to incorporate a forest school, art, music, and gymnastics studios, a rooftop playground and an extensive, attractive school library.

The school community is reflective of the ethnic diversity of the borough of Southwark, with an above average proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average. Numbers of pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are below those seen nationally, whilst numbers of pupils with an education, health and care plan are close to the national average.

CDPS is the lead school in the London South Teaching School Alliance, an 'Education Endowment research school', a 'stronger practice hub' for nurseries and childminders, a 'DfE behaviour hub' and a 'flexible working ambassador school'. CDPS has achieved gold status as a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Rights Respecting School and shares its wellbeing and wider curriculum design and resources. The school is in the top 1% of schools nationally for attainment, and the headteacher works in an advisory capacity with the DfE. Its values of 'excellence', 'creativity' and 'social intelligence' are at the heart of the school's culture, where enrichment and equal opportunity for all are paramount.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The dynamic and inspirational headteacher, and his proactive deputy, are supported by strong senior leaders. Together they drive the school with passion, commitment, and dedication. Their infectious enthusiasm is mirrored by staff across the school, where there is a relentless focus on learning excellence and wide opportunities for all. The highly organised distributed leadership structure ensures that leaders at all levels, including year group and subject leaders, have very clear roles and responsibilities. The robust communication system in place, involving all school leaders and governors,

means that no stone is left unturned in identifying and following up on next steps of development.

- The ambitious shared vision, underpinned by the aspirational ethos of excellence, ensures that the high standards staff set for themselves are reflected in the pupils. Consequently, Charles Dickens is a happy school, with a strong team spirit, where every member of the school family is appropriately supported to reach their potential, both academically and personally. This culminates in a 'greatness award' linked to the school values which pupils can achieve at different levels.
- Decisions for next step developments are grounded in evidence-based research, including numerous national research projects on which they lead. These include an Educational Endowment Fund (EEF) 'fluency' project, which Charles Dickens is now trialling with 20 schools. Work with Yale University and the headteacher's involvement on Government Advisory Boards, also support the innovative culture of the school.
- Teachers' subject and pedagogical knowledge is developed exceptionally well through coaching, sharing high levels of staff expertise, supporting other schools and external training opportunities.
- Collaborative working with other primary and secondary schools in the Charter Schools Educational Trust provides valuable opportunities to share best practice and develop leadership opportunities through a variety of trust and national training opportunities, including national professional qualifications. As a result, non-specialist teachers and early career teachers are supported exceptionally well, as are trainee teachers, through the work CDPS provides as the lead school in the London South Teaching School Alliance.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary and reflect the consistent expectation for pupils to be, 'ready', 'respectful', and 'safe'. As a designated behaviour hub, the range of strategies shared with other schools can be seen in practice across CDPS. The exceptionally strong focus on the wellbeing of all is exemplified through separate lessons using booklets created through an EEF project, which are shared with many schools and international visitors.
- Pupil leadership is encouraged and is a strength of the school. In addition to holding a range of leadership roles, pupils lead extra-curricular clubs, including jewellery making. Over fifty staff-led clubs reflect the strong commitment to, and involvement in, the wider life of the school.

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

... leaders created subject specific, at a glance documents, which set out the key progression of concepts to further support impactful learning.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Children get off to a flying start in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at CDPS, where their needs are carefully met. A wealth of attractive, well-organised resources, encourage children to explore, investigate, write, and develop language skills. The well-used school garden and small forest school further enhance this provision, which is also utilised as part of the flexible two-year-old offer. Consequently, children are well prepared for Year 1, where a significantly higher proportion of pupils than national meet the expected standard in phonics.
- Outcomes at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are significantly above the national average, with an exceptionally high proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.
- A love of reading is promoted throughout the school, alongside a robust, consistently implemented phonics and progressional reading strategy. This is enriched by 'fluency' research project materials created by school leaders. A well-stocked and attractive library, reading passports, challenges, and author visits, including non-fiction authors linked to units of work on Anglo Saxons and Vikings, support both a love of reading, and the wider curriculum.
- The well-embedded mathematics 'mastery' scheme delivered through skilled teaching, is further enhanced with additional resources. Robust staff induction and coaching from the subject leader, along with effective pupil catch up, ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged. This is reflected in exceptionally strong outcomes.
- Senior leaders and subject leaders have together created a well-planned, bespoke wider curriculum. It is refined annually and provides a wealth of opportunity for pupils to develop strong cultural capital. Interactive booklets, which reflect and support the school's identity, provide interesting opportunities to promote learning and prepare pupils for life in today's world. For example, Year 5 pupils, as part of a unit of work on 'Power to the People', study the powerful impact people over the years have had on change. Pupils study the slave trade, hold debates on 'votes for women' and write suffragette speeches. They have also been involved in active campaigning for national climate change, and the Eco Committee have visited the Houses of Parliament. Understanding of equality and British values is incorporated extremely well throughout the curriculum of this diverse and inclusive school, where spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to the school's ethos. Leaders have supported numerous schools in curriculum development, and market their own strong curriculum.

- A specialist teacher model is used to plan and deliver art, music, and PE across the school. This exceptional provision of highly inspirational teaching and immersion into cultural opportunities within and beyond the classroom enables all pupils to gain experiences that many would not otherwise have. Specialist studios provide well-resourced learning, as do 'art hub' lessons which pupils across the trust, nationally and internationally can access at home. Highly-skilled music tuition, observed in a Year 4 guitar lesson, was truly inspirational and culminates in all pupils having the opportunity to achieve a national music accreditation.
- Trusting relationships, consistently high expectations by all staff, well-embedded routines, and interesting learning experiences, engage pupils' interests well. Therefore, they want to come to school, and pupil attendance is in the top 20% of schools nationally. The 'keep up, catch up' approach used across the curriculum is supported by a three-teacher model across the two forms of entry. This approach, along with interventions precisely targeted to identified individual needs, ensures that all pupils achieve the outcomes of which they are capable. Communication with parents is strong. They are enabled to support their child's learning through workshops and online resources, and have opportunities to share in their child's learning.

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

... further opportunities were explored to incorporate additional digital technology, where relevant, into the wider curriculum.

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

- Consistently applied, high expectations for every child to achieve their very best, both academically and personally, ensure that no stone is left unturned in supporting all pupils and their families to overcome any barriers to pupils' learning and personal development.
- Leadership of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs is extremely strong. Early identification, swift action and proactive support are given the highest priority. Targeted intervention to address identified need is then rigorously implemented and closely monitored.
- The special educational needs and/or disabilities co-ordinator (SENCO) maximises opportunities to further enhance provision. Examples of this are work with a local special school to provide further visual support, and the use

of evidence-based research to minimise cognitive overload in classrooms to ensure calm, inclusive environments which enable all pupils to learn effectively. As the lead school in a behaviour hub, CDPS ensures that clear routines, consistency, and high expectations provide high levels of support for pupils with social, emotional, and behavioural challenges. The recently developed 'wellbeing' curriculum enhances pupils' resilience and independence. SEND pupils also have opportunities to enhance their life skills through marketing their home grown produce at Borough Market.

- An informal resource provision has been created in school to support pupils with autism, with staff training provided to ensure that all pupils receive the best possible support to meet their needs. CDPS has subsequently supported another school in the trust to set up a similar provision.
- As the curriculum is already well established, this allows time for staff to create appropriate adaptations, so that pupils with SEND can maximise their learning at an appropriate pace and with relevant resources.
- Differences in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, compared with their non-disadvantaged peers, have been eroded over time to the extent that there is now no difference. Every pupil is carefully targeted and appropriately supported to reach their potential, both academically and through the wide range of opportunities provided for personal development, including the impressive creative curriculum in place at CDPS. These include exceptional opportunities through the art and music curriculums and other curriculum areas to participate in experiences that they may not otherwise have. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is on offer to all at CDPS. Leaders closely monitor these to ensure that all pupils have equality of access and take up.

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

There were no identified development points. The recommendation is to continue the current very strong practice in place.

5. Area of Excellence

High-quality art and music for all

Accredited

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

The inspirational, highly-skilled, specialist teachers of music and art have created curriculums which take pupils well beyond National Curriculum expectations. They ensure that all pupils experience a wealth of opportunities to engage in creativity and to build cultural capital, enabling every child to have access to the same life chances.

Their expertise enables knowledgeable sequential planning of these subjects across school from Nursery to Year 6, based on the National Curriculum. Units of learning within both specialist subjects, for every year group, are expertly planned, with sequential learning objectives building to a clear end point. These are delivered through highly creative, developmental learning opportunities which pupils enjoy and remember, as links to prior and future learning are made explicit. Great effort has been taken to ensure that both the art and the music curriculums are diverse and inclusive. Skills and knowledge have been broken down into manageable chunks, each one building on the last, so that, over time, pupils acquire a rich understanding of each discipline. High expectations of appropriate behaviour for learning ensure pupils' complete focus in lessons, where they demonstrate exceptional behaviour for learning.

In music, all pupils become confident in playing a variety of musical instruments, including ukulele and guitar. They also take a national theory examination at the end of Year 6, which they work towards by creating an accumulation of contextualised theory over time from Year 2. Opportunities are provided to explore the context of lyrics and mood in pieces of music, which improve the quality of pupils' performance, as well as regular practice in reading and writing musical notation. The nature of provision and regular access to individual instruments for all, as well as 1:1 music tuition, ensure that there is no gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. A 'can do' culture is promoted for everyone, including staff, who also have opportunities to learn to play the guitar. Pupils with SEND are provided with purposeful scaffolding to enable them to access the same fun learning through a wide variety of musical traditions. As one pupil said, 'It doesn't really feel like learning, it feels like having fun'.

As part of the planning process, links with other subjects have been made and included in curriculum design, providing a clear pathway to interact with their learning as a whole and to build schema. For example, children in Reception are provided with opportunities for mark making and layering of objects around the story, 'Where

the Wild Things Are'. Their learning culminates in a 'Wild Rupus' performance using masks made by the children. As part of Year 1 work about 'the seaside', pupils are provided with opportunities linked to the world around them that they may not otherwise have, and they create pieces of art working with their findings from the beach.

Senior leaders and the two specialist teachers have worked to support pupils' engagement in creative arts beyond the curriculum. The art lead has developed an 'art hub', an online resource for pupils to access inspiring artists from home. This has been utilised by many other schools across the trust and beyond, both nationally and internationally. It also supports families who are unable to visit local galleries. Built into the curriculum is a range of opportunities to inspire pupils, including gallery visits, artistic visitors, a concert violinist, a London Chamber Orchestra workshop, and participation in choir competitions. A scheme called the 'greatness award' encourages pupils to access academia and the creative arts, and to demonstrate social intelligence. 100% of pupils access free adult and pupil led extra-curricular clubs, including daily ensembles, choirs, bands, comic drawing and eco art. Every year group participates in a performance each year.

The art leader coordinates the Charter Trust primary art network for subject leaders and has supported schools in building their art curriculum. The school supported Ofsted with their recent subject review in music and was identified as a beacon school. The music lead is currently undertaking a MA at the Royal College of Music, whilst the art lead holds a PhD in visual mapping and is embarking upon a MA in art therapy.

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

Outcomes in both art and music are exceptionally high, as are academic outcomes, which are well above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics at both the expected and the higher standard. There is no gap between the attainment of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils. 70% of pupils in Year 6 passed their music theory examination in 2023, with 80% targeted for 2024. 98% of pupils have achieved their bronze 'greatness award'. Strong outcomes in pupils' sketch books and their verbal knowledge of artists, performers and passion for the arts are exceptional.

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

Amy Mulvenna and Tama Nathan



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Heads of music and art

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Following the QA Review

Leaders would like to access increased Challenge Partners hub opportunities, share their Areas of Excellence with other schools and explore other areas of best practice linked to their next steps of development.

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.

Both the School Support Directory and the Shared Leading Practice events can be accessed via the Challenge Partners website. (<https://www.challengepartners.org/>)



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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>)