



## QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

### REVIEW REPORT FOR CHARLES DICKENS PRIMARY SCHOOL

<b>Name of School:</b>	Charles Dickens Primary School
<b>Headteacher/Principal:</b>	Cassandra Buchanan
<b>Hub:</b>	London South Hub
<b>School type:</b>	Primary
<b>MAT (if applicable):</b>	N/A

<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:</b>	Leading
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	20/01/2020
<b>Overall Estimate at last QA Review (if applicable)</b>	Outstanding
<b>Date of last QA Review (if applicable)</b>	19/03/2019
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	Outstanding
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	24/09/2019



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#### Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising host school leaders and visiting reviewers agree that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

**Leadership at all levels** Leading

**Quality of provision and outcomes** Leading

**AND**

**Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs**

**Area of Excellence (if applicable)** Accredited

**Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence (if applicable)** Improving the mental health and well-being of all pupils to remove barriers to learning, 20/01/2020

**Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate** Leading

*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**

Charles Dickens is a large primary school in the London borough of Southwark. It runs two nurseries for two and three-year olds and has two forms in each year group from Reception to Year 6. Its catchment area is relatively small but densely populated. The area houses a socially and ethnically mixed community. The school's pastoral team has established links with many families.

The school population is made up of groups from a wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average and the proportion with special needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is close to the national average. Many pupils who have SEND are also disadvantaged. In the afternoons, the school operates a 'satellite' class for pupils who have an education, health and care plan. Several of these pupils are on the autistic spectrum.

Charles Dickens is the lead school in the London South Teaching School Alliance and a United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) rights respecting school, having achieved the UNICEF gold standard. It is also an Education Endowment Foundation research school. The aims of its curriculum are to ensure academic excellence, provide engaging and creative experiences, and to ensure pupils are happy and know their rights.

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

- The very knowledgeable headteacher is inspirational in her relentless pursuit of improving provision and support for pupils and their families. She has clear, well-defined high expectations of staff and has developed a warm, inclusive and highly ambitious culture. Leadership is distributed widely with leaders' roles reflecting the needs of the school and the curriculum. Teachers benefit from opportunities for leadership and research. Leaders work collaboratively and supportively and act as good professional role models for staff and pupils.
- Leaders are passionate about their roles and very clear about the school's many strengths, the effectiveness of its teaching strategies and pupils' achievements. They have sustained high quality provision and outcomes for pupils for several years. There is a strong focus on developing the whole child and taking full account of children's well-being and mental health.
- Leaders are well aware of recent national initiatives and are confident and willing to develop fresh approaches to teaching, based on evidence and research. For example, the school garden has been converted into a forest school and assessment and marking procedures have been overhauled.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching carefully through lesson observations and looking at pupils' work and the progress they are making. Professional

development is well planned, bespoke and regular. For example, every teacher has targeted coaching to ensure consistency and continual improvement in pedagogy as well as a professional development programme. Strong pedagogy in different subjects is maintained through specialist teachers, such as in music and art, a detailed curriculum plan and regular training.

- The curriculum, based around the National Curriculum, has been planned to be ambitious and exciting. It reflects the high expectations that leaders have of pupils. As a rights-respecting school, pupils learn about fairness and the rights of the individual. They are taught about mental health and well-being and have many opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as school counsellor, 'reading buddy' and peer mentor. Pupils develop self-confidence and become self-assured. As one pupil explained 'We can become whatever we want to be'. Pupils are informed about current events and politics. They have visited the Houses of Parliament and protested about climate change in the local park.
- The well-being of pupils and staff is central to the leadership team's planning. For example, the school's approach to assessment, 'mark less, mark better', enables teachers to work fewer hours. There is a plan for professional development that meets the personal ambitions of staff as well as the school's priorities.
- In many ways, the school is the centre of the community. For example, strong support is given to parents to help pupils at home through social media, 'stay and play' sessions, workshops and coffee morning. The pastoral team establishes contact with families and helps them to access social services. The school now operates a food bank and supports other members of the community. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is high.

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

...the school was made even more 'autism friendly' by achieving the Autism Friendly Award from the National Autistic Society.

## **3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well**

- Based on the school's three pillars of academic excellence, creative arts and social intelligence, the Charles Dickens' curriculum is ambitious with high expectations and inclusivity for all pupils. It is consistently and coherently planned across all subjects. Careful consideration is given to the sequencing of learning so that knowledge and skills are developed logically and cross-curricular links are emphasised. School-produced booklets, such as in science, are excellent

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reservoirs of knowledge and include key information sections that help pupils to understand and recall earlier learning.

- Mathematics teaching has been very successful in embedding mathematical fluency and reasoning and problem-solving skills. Former pupils have done very well in secondary mathematics as a result. Writing is taught very effectively through high quality texts and practice in writing for a wide range of purposes. Teachers stimulate pupils' imagination well, through story-telling and drama, which encourages them to write.
- Reading is promoted very well. Guided reading sessions help pupils to develop good comprehension skills and widen their vocabulary. Teachers read challenging texts aloud and pupils read daily at home. Pupils borrow books each week from the school library, and 'reading passports' encourage pupils to be more ambitious in their reading choices.
- Extracurricular provision is also very well planned. For example, pupils benefit from experiences that help them develop independence and confidence, such as increasingly adventurous trips and visits to theatres. A diverse range of afterschool clubs, such as coding, football, circus and pilot clubs, richly enhance the curriculum.
- High quality consistent teaching ensures all pupils, including those who have SEND or who are disadvantaged, achieve very well in the core subjects. In 2019, Year 6 pupils made above or well above average progress in reading, writing and mathematics and attained highly, repeating the pattern of previous years. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 was similarly strong, particularly in reading.
- Teachers are confident in their own subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. The successful focus on developing pupils' vocabulary, language and comprehension skills develops pupils' communication skills from low starting points. Teachers model clearly what they expect pupils to do, for example, the steps they should take in planning a piece of writing. Pupils in Year 6 followed these steps closely to produce high quality work, using adventurous vocabulary and accurate grammar.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. They set suitably demanding work and provide helpful resources that support pupils' learning. In mathematics, for example, teachers often use manipulatives to help pupils understand operations.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. They are ready and eager to learn. They are proud of the high quality of their writing, their success in mathematics and of the work they complete in their booklets. They are respectful of one another and of staff and, in a diverse mix of cultures and backgrounds, collaborate well.
- Children do very well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The early years leader is passionate and very knowledgeable about each child and about early years practice. The environment is very well organised. Acquisition of communication and language skills is a priority and meets the needs of children who, generally, when they start, have not yet developed the skills typical for their age. Adults engage children in conversation at every opportunity, prompting curiosity and

further exploration, and make good use of visuals, gestures and finger signs to emphasise words. Children develop independence, settle into school routines and make good progress so that the proportion reaching a good level of development has been in line with the national average.

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

No areas for further improvement of any substance were identified.

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

- Provision for pupils who have SEND or who are disadvantaged is one of the school's strengths. The SEND coordinator ensures provision is closely tailored to pupils' needs and that staff are empowered to help pupils make strong progress in academic, social and emotional areas.
- Pupils' special educational needs are identified early and accurately. Good use is made of external specialists to assess pupils' needs and to help plan specific support. The curriculum is clearly adapted to be ambitious and meet their needs. Each pupil has a personalised plan, including targets, which also address their social and emotional needs. Teachers, who are regularly monitored, ensure pupils make good progress towards those targets. Interventions are used appropriately to ensure pupils do not fall behind.
- The 'satellite' class, comprising several pupils with education, health and care plans and some with autism, provides a safe, calm environment in the afternoons. Pupils learn social, play and life skills. The group was seen in the Forest School area. They were able to interact sensibly with each other and adults and to follow instructions, having got used to the expected behaviours. Exclusions were reduced to zero last year, despite some pupils having already been excluded from previous schools.
- Disadvantaged pupils do very well at Charles Dickens. Support for them mirrors the approach taken for pupils with SEND. In 2019, those in Year 6 who did not also have SEND, achieved at the same high level as their peers. Pupils with SEND made very strong progress to meet their ambitious targets.

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

No areas for further improvement of any substance were identified.

## **5. Area of Excellence**

Title: Improving the mental health and well-being of all pupils to remove barriers to learning

**Accredited**

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

Mental health and well-being are central to the school's work. Several teachers have been trained in the RULER method to improve mental health and well-being. This approach is used in hundreds of schools across the USA and significant improvements in mental health have been achieved.

Based on this research, Charles Dickens Primary School has created its own approach to supporting pupils' mental health. Lessons provide pupils with support for their mental health in much the same way that physical education lessons support pupils' physical health. The scheme has been in operation at Charles Dickens for five years and Ofsted reported it as a noticeable strength

To ensure teaching is of high quality a complete curriculum package has been produced comprising: work schemes; vocabulary progression lists; parent workshops; training manuals; assessment tools; and booklets.

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

Since the inception of the RULER approach, there has been a correlation with:

- a drop in the number of referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and faster acceptance of referrals that are made as the school can demonstrate with evidence the support that has already been given
- improved behaviour due to better self-regulation by pupils, leading to less time spent by teachers resolving pupils' disputes
- better regulation by pupils of their emotions so that they are more resilient and more focused in lessons.

### **5.3 What is the name, job title and email address of the staff lead in**



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**this area?**

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

None identified at the moment.

**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.**