
CHALLENGE PARTNERS: Quality Assurance Review Written Report

Name of School:	Castlebar School
School Address:	Hathaway Gardens, Ealing, W13 0DH
Hub School:	Woodfield

Telephone Number:	020 8998 3135
Email address:	admin@castlebar.ealing.sch.uk

Unique Reference Number:	101966
Local Authority:	Ealing
Type of School:	Special
School Category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Number on roll:	120
Head teacher/Principal:	Paul Adair

Date of last Ofsted inspection:	24-25 June 2009
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	1 - Outstanding

Date of Quality Assurance Review:	28-29 November 2013
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QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW – SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES

School Improvement Strategies: Outstanding

Achievement is: Outstanding

Quality of Teaching: Outstanding

Area of Excellent Practice:

**Professional development in
the area of complex special
educational needs** Confirmed

Overall Review Evaluation

The Quality Assurance Review found indicators that Castlebar School appears to be firmly within the Outstanding grade as judged by Ofsted in the school's previous Ofsted report 24-25 June 2009.

Information about the school

Castlebar is a special school for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties. The profile of the school population is changing over time, with an increasing proportion of pupils with severe learning difficulties and comorbid autism spectrum conditions. Some pupils also have additional difficulties including hearing impairment. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. They come from a range of ethnic backgrounds, with many being of Asian or African origin. A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a class with Year 1 pupils. The school provides advice and support to local authority mainstream schools. The school trains teachers under the Schools Direct scheme.

School Improvement Strategies

What went well

- The school's astute self-evaluation is based on rigorous monitoring of pupils' attainment and progress. Leaders at all levels have an excellent grasp of the data analyses that are relevant to their roles. This information is used very well to identify development priorities.
- School improvement planning focuses on the priority areas of communication, socialisation, independence and capacity. Appropriate, specific targets with clear success criteria have been established where relative weaknesses have been identified. Middle leaders contribute effectively to whole school planning.
- Recent actions taken as a result of school improvement planning have had demonstrable impact on classroom practice and outcomes for pupils. For example, an improved focus on structured learning approaches has resulted in better pupil motivation and a significant reduction in the use of physical interventions. This has had a noticeable effect on improving pupils' abilities to focus on learning in lessons.
- The school has ensured that teachers' classroom practice has evolved and developed quickly and successfully to meet the changing profile of pupils' special educational needs. Professional development has ensured that teachers and teaching assistants have a range of skills drawn from systems such as TEACCH, ABA, Waldon and Makaton. This allows them to draw upon the strategies and techniques that provide the most useful approaches to improving pupils' learning and development without being tied to a single methodology.
- The school's involvement in school-centred initial teacher training has had a particularly positive effect on improving teachers' understanding of the professional standards.

Even better if

- The rigour of middle leadership of numeracy matched that demonstrated in communication, language and literacy.

Pupil Achievement

- The school can demonstrate, from its analyses of pupils' progress through the P scales, that achievement is outstanding. High proportions of pupils make expected and better than expected progress against rigorously challenging benchmarks in their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils make equally strong progress in both literacy and numeracy.

- In literacy, pupils' generally make more rapid progress in listening and speaking than in reading and writing. There has been a trend of improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment in speaking, listening and reading over the last three years. Achievement in writing has remained more steady over this period.
- During this time, pupils have made broadly equal progress in each of the three numeracy strands. More recently, a larger proportion than previously have made slower progress in developing their using and applying skills.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium generally progress as well as their peers in both literacy and numeracy. However, a smaller proportion makes exceptional progress in numeracy compared to literacy. There is a small gap between the performance of boys, who are the majority in the school and do better, and that of girls. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make marginally better progress in literacy than their peers, who make slightly faster progress in literacy. The school successfully ensures that being a summer-born pupil makes little difference to the amount of progress that is made, although summer-born pupils are less likely to make exceptional progress in literacy than their peers.
- The school has identified that pupils make faster progress in Years R to 4 than they do in Years 5 and 6. Nevertheless, over time pupils make sustained and rapid progress so that they reach and exceed challenging targets.

Quality of teaching

Outstanding teaching was observed in many lessons across all Key Stages during the review. Judgements on lessons were agreed fully with the senior leaders who took part in the joint observations, which shows that their judgements are accurate.

What went well

- Where teaching is outstanding, teachers have consistently high expectations of all pupils and effectively check pupils' understanding throughout lessons so that they make rapid progress.
- Meticulous planning is based on detailed progress records and advice from the multi-disciplinary team. Teachers and support staff show a deep understanding of the needs of the pupils and use well-judged and often imaginative strategies to engage pupils in learning.
- Teachers differentiate their expectations appropriately so that the work they give pupils is very well matched to individual abilities, strengths and preferences. This ensures that each pupil is appropriately challenged.
- Teachers use creative strategies very well. They draw on skills from a range of different programmes and approaches, to facilitate learning and meet pupils' communication and interaction needs. This contributes strongly to maintaining pace and progress when pupils demonstrate misunderstandings and misconceptions.
- Teachers use questioning well to deepen learning and develop pupils' comprehension and understanding.
- Excellent phonic modelling leads to pupils sounding out accurately.
- Positive behaviour management techniques and motivators are used to engage students and maximise progress. Yoga sessions, circle time and use of the Waldon Approach help to promote the strong development of fine and gross motor skills and co-ordination.
- Communication systems are well established. For example, staff use Makaton signs and symbols very well to support pupils' learning and understanding. Pupils are taught to use supportive visual learning schedules with increasing independence.

- Resources are well matched to pupils' ages and the stages of their development. There is engaging use of ICT to facilitate learning including visualisers, iPads, cameras, interactive whiteboards and software packages. The use of ICT by pupils is encouraged and this helps promote the development of their independent learning skills.
- Highly skilled support staff are effectively deployed by teachers. They make a strong contribution to learning, for example, by maintaining pupils' engagement and leading small group interventions. The creative use of pupil and sports premium funding to employ PE specialists enables teachers to have a clear understanding of how to promote physical development most effectively.

Even better if

- Pupils were challenged to develop their language skills by being given take up time or other support to answer open questions.
- Staff helped improve pupils' reading skills by encouraging the use of visual cues before supplementing with signs.
- Key words were displayed to support spoken language.
- Motivators were used throughout all lessons.
- Subject specific learning objectives were made clear to pupils and shared with all adults in the classroom.

Quality of Area of Excellent Practice

The school has developed its staff, both teachers and teaching assistants, to become outstanding practitioners in meeting the needs of children with complex learning difficulties through structured learning. They now offer this expertise to the wider community including parents, other schools and universities. The Headteacher is a National Leader of Education and has been praised for the quality of support given to SEN schools. The school is involved in numerous training partnerships including training teachers, nurses, psychologists as well as delivering accredited programmes such as Supporting Teaching and Learning, and the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership. The school runs an oversubscribed outreach programme for schools and is keen to secure funding to develop this further.

The pupils benefit from this area of excellence by receiving an outstanding provision from highly qualified staff who are keen to further develop their expertise, are reflective and creative in their pursuit of excellence. As a result of this, pupils are making rapid and sustained progress. Staff are highly motivated and take great pride in their work because the school invests significantly in training. It was clear in the meeting with the school council that students have very strong relationships with staff. In lessons, outstanding progress could only be made for students with such a range of needs thanks to the close teamwork between teaching and support staff. In some lessons it was difficult to determine who was the teacher and who was the support staff because all adults were involved in leading learning.

Partnerships

- As a National Support School the leadership team, and especially the headteacher as a National Leader of Education, provide advice and guidance to other special schools and

mainstream primary schools. This is particularly aligned to the school's area of excellent practice or connected with developing better leadership structures.

- The school is fully involved in teacher training in conjunction with St Mary's College, Surrey University. This allows the school to be involved in discussions about new initiatives and take on trainee teachers on teaching practice. It has also led the development of adapted standards for trainee teachers in special schools in conjunction with Brunel University.
- As part of Challenge Partners, the school has hosted training, and senior leaders will be participating in reviews next year, having recently completed training. The school business manager networks with other professionals to help promote stronger links between school improvement and best value.

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.