



## QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

### REVIEW REPORT FOR DOROTHY STRINGER SCHOOL

<b>Name of School:</b>	Dorothy Stringer School
<b>Headteacher/Principal:</b>	Matt Hillier
<b>Hub:</b>	Brighton and Hove
<b>School phase:</b>	Secondary
<b>MAT (if applicable):</b>	N/A

<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:</b>	N/A
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	01/11/2023
<b>Overall Estimate at last QA Review</b>	Effective
<b>Date of last QA Review</b>	01/02/2023
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	Good
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	10/10/2023



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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** Not applicable

**Quality of provision and outcomes** Not applicable

**AND**

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

**Area of excellence** Not applicable

**Previously accredited valid areas of excellence** Not applicable

**Overall peer evaluation estimate** Not applicable

***The Quality Assurance Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades. The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is developmental not judgmental.***

## 1. Context and character of the school

Dorothy Stringer School is a consistently oversubscribed, larger than average, mixed local authority maintained comprehensive school with approximately 1650 pupils aged 11-16 years old. It is located centrally within the city of Brighton and Hove. The school was built in the 1950's and is based on a large site.

The school serves a socio-economically varied, diverse community. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium is just below the national average. However, approximately a quarter of pupils live in some of the most deprived wards in the country. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is close to the national average. The stability of pupils is well above average.

The proportion of pupils with educational, health and care plans is above the national average.

The school's strapline is 'education for life'. The core values are creativity, resilience and respect. The school takes a lead on environmental work and has been a Green Flag Eco school for over 23 years.

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

- Leaders at all levels are ambitious for their school and their community. They are united in their passion and determination that all pupils should succeed and that the provision is inclusive for all. Senior leaders are highly reflective, knowledgeable and considered. They work collegiately to ensure that Dorothy Stringer continues to evolve in a sustainable manner. Those responsible for governance have a strong, balanced understanding of the school. They offer timely and appropriate critical support.
- Senior leaders provide middle leaders with high levels of support, development and challenge. Leadership is widely distributed. Middle leaders are empowered. The well-developed line management structure ensures senior leaders maintain strategic oversight. In turn, middle leaders trust teachers to make autonomous decisions as leaders of learning.

- Leaders continue to develop their comprehensive curriculum subject review processes. These involve the use of many sources of information for forensic analysis and evaluation. These reviews have supported improvements in the science curriculum and its implementation. Provision in the department has developed. Pupils' achievements in this subject have increased significantly. Middle leaders also use reviews as evidence for bidding, internally, on resources for school improvement projects. For example, reviews supported the introduction of a new approach to reading in tutor time. Pupils now read quality texts and teachers' delivery is supported through guidance materials and continuous professional development (CPD). Pupils' reading fluency has improved as a result.
- Middle leaders work collaboratively. This allows a joint focus on whole school strategies. An example is the development of the 'The Stringer Way'. These are a set of expectations that provide clarity for staff, pupils and families. They were created through consultation with all leaders. The introduction of 'The Stringer Way' has led to a greater consistency across the school. There are improved structures, organisation and communication. Pupils commented on the more consistent routines. For example, they appreciate the school-wide approach of staff greeting them at classroom doors. One said, 'When you see a teacher at the door you feel ready for learning because you know they are ready'.
- Staff benefit from a range of professional learning opportunities. The CPD programme is led by senior teachers. Weekly teaching and learning bulletins, supported by in-service training, ensure that information on evidence-based research and best practice is shared. Staff participate in external CPD, such as in 'maths mastery'. Seven members of staff are undertaking national professional qualifications. Highly knowledgeable and inspirational speakers address staff. These experiences have contributed to the improvement of provision. An example is the development of inclusive curriculum design. This was refined following a guest speaker acting as a catalyst to facilitate staff's further consideration of unconscious bias and the decolonisation of the curriculum.
- Leaders are mindful of their colleagues' workload and well-being. Their understanding of staff's experiences and views is enhanced through surveys. Feedback from these led to the introduction of well-being hampers and well-being afternoons. Supported by the care which is afforded to them, staff often go over and above to provide pupils with additional experience and opportunities.

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

... all leaders continued the drive for consistency from all staff in all areas of the school.

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

- Strong, warm relationships between staff and pupils create a very positive, calm and purposeful environment. Pupils value the support that adults give. They recognise their teachers' enthusiasm. One said, 'You can tell they are all passionate about their subjects'. Another pupil shared that 'It is almost impossible not to learn'. As a result of this harmonious approach, pupils readily engage in learning and in the broad range of extra-curricular opportunities that includes creative, academic and sporting activities.
- The use of 'do now' tasks has been developed across departments to support pupils to make links to their prior knowledge. This aids their recall of previously taught content. For example, in history and mathematics, 'do now' tasks ensure that pupils are immediately engaged in learning. In a Year 8 history lesson on the reformation of the Catholic Church, pupils were provided at the start with sentence starters and questions which allowed them to make connections to previous learning.
- Teachers across the school use questioning skillfully to facilitate active learning for pupils and to deepen their thinking. In Years 10 and 11 science lessons, questions asked by teachers meant that pupils' misconceptions were accurately identified. Precise explanations were provided and learning was extended. In a Year 7 drama lesson involving pupils using visualisation and acting in role, carefully selected questions were used to ensure pupils had secure understanding. This supported them to be successful and apply their knowledge.
- Pupils in mathematics are stretched and challenged. Teachers of the subject have high expectations of learners, including in their oracy. Pupils are encouraged to use correct, accurate mathematical terminology. They respond accordingly and provide full explanations with appropriate vocabulary. This helps to demonstrate understanding and allows pupils to learn from their peers. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, pupils were able to clearly articulate the processes they had used for problem solving. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils in mathematics have achieved well above the national average for both progress and attainment.
- In the vast majority of lessons across all subjects, teachers have high and clear expectations for pupils. This supports their high levels of engagement. This was

evident in a Year 9 drama lesson, involving physical theatre, where the teacher expected all pupils to immerse themselves in the learning, which resulted in full participation.

- The literacy team leads the further development of literacy across all departments. They have developed systems to assist other leaders and teachers to promote reading in all subjects. All teachers have access to pupils' reading data. Furthermore, the literacy team has improved the identification of underlying needs which may be acting as barriers to reading. Pupils, where appropriate, are supported by specific, focused interventions. Reading for pleasure is promoted, including the use of the thoughtfully utilised and inspiring library. Surveys show pupils are increasingly engaged in reading. A tracking system indicates that there is increased independent use of the library by pupils. The school reports that standardised reading assessments show that a decreasing number of pupils are reading at below age-related expectations.
- The school's ambitious curriculum is reflected by the fact that nearly double the national average of pupils sit the EBacc. Leaders ensure that further guidance is provided for pupils in Key Stage 4 who do not take all the EBacc subjects to ensure that they experience a broad programme of study.

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

... in all lessons, there was the same clear structure and challenge from the start, as seen in the most effective lessons.

... In all lessons, teachers had ambitious learning expectations and trusted students to work independently and interdependently as seen in the majority of lessons.

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

- The school works closely with a range of external services to enhance the support available to vulnerable pupils. This benefits their attendance, engagement and achievement. A weekly 'panel' brings together a wide range of professionals including an educational psychologist, an education welfare officer, a school nurse and members of the inclusion and pastoral teams. The panel helps inform approaches to best support vulnerable pupils' emotional health and well-being. This leads to targeted and innovative solutions being put in place.

- The school provides an alternative, bespoke curriculum for a small number of pupils with high levels of additional need. Pupils who benefit from this access mainstream lessons whilst also being provided with other learning opportunities such as cooking and gardening. For example, work with a graffiti artist has led to those pupils' attendance improving significantly. The inclusion team works relentlessly to reach out to those pupils that follow an alternative curriculum to form positive and trusting relationships. These approaches help some of the most vulnerable pupils to engage in school life and contribute to the low level of suspensions and exclusions.
- The school carefully evaluates strategies and interventions for disadvantaged pupils. The pupil premium leader works with staff to help identify the barriers that pupils may be facing, including issues related to attendance. They seek to understand individual circumstances with a focus on 'becoming an expert on the child not the label'. This means they are able to work collaboratively with families and pupils to find solutions to mitigate these. For example, the school is working proactively with parents and carers around addressing emotionally based school avoidance. This includes outreach work, with members of staff going into the community to foster relationships. This has led to a reduction in anxiety for some pupils and an increase in their attendance.
- The school supports vulnerable pupils to take up extra-curricular opportunities. Before pupils start in Year 7, staff run a programme to build connections to the school. During Year 7, assemblies and fairs take place to encourage pupils to access the wider offer. Across the school the take up by vulnerable pupils is tracked. This monitoring enables tutors to be aware if pupils are not participating. Tutors will have conversations with individuals to understand why they are not accessing opportunities, and to see how the school might support them to do so. Staff listen to pupils and will create new clubs based on their interests. These strategies support the high number of disadvantaged pupils who access enrichment programmes.
- Over the last two years there has been a concerted focus on adaptive teaching. Leaders have ensured that research and best practice have been shared so staff are informed of the importance of this approach and strategies that may be used. Staff access a range of information about pupils' needs which is then used in the vast majority of lessons to put adaptations in place. Pupils feel that the teachers know them and can describe how learning is adapted.

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

... staff continued to identify and overcome the individual barriers to attendance for disadvantaged pupils.

## **5. Area of Excellence**

N/A

### **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 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/>)

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>)