



## QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

### REVIEW REPORT FOR ABBNEYFIELD SCHOOL

<b>Name of School:</b>	Abbeyfield School
<b>Headteacher/Principal:</b>	Ralph Plummer and Nick Norgrove
<b>Hub:</b>	Wootton Bassett
<b>School type:</b>	Community Secondary Comprehensive
<b>MAT (if applicable):</b>	Not applicable

<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:</b>	EFFECTIVE
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	06/11/2019
<b>Overall Estimate at last QA Review (if applicable)</b>	GOOD
<b>Date of last QA Review (if applicable)</b>	19/02/2018
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	GOOD
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	15/03/2017

## 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** EFFECTIVE

**Quality of provision and outcomes** EFFECTIVE

**AND**

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

**Area of Excellence (if applicable)** Not applicable

**Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence (if applicable)** Sixth form achievement intervention and tracking  
19/02/2018

**Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate** EFFECTIVE

*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

Abbeyfield School opened in 2000 in a new building on the outskirts of Chippenham, funded through a new private finance initiative. It has grown steadily and is now an average-sized secondary school with a sixth form of around 130 students. It prides itself on being a 'big school which is small enough to know each child'. The school is set in extensive grounds and benefits from its relatively new building. The school's values are based around kindness and integrity and the key characteristics of leadership, organisation, resilience, initiative, respect, independence and communication.

The majority of pupils are of white British heritage, with small numbers from a range of minority ethnic groups. There are a few pupils who are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is broadly average. Around a fifth of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which is just below the national average, but the number has been growing each year. There is a high level of mobility with significant numbers of students joining the school at times other than the start of the school year; leaders refer to these students as the 'mid-year entrants' (MYE) group.

The school has had five different headteachers since its inception and 21 new staff joined the school in September. The last headteacher left in January 2019 and the two headteachers, who were former deputies at the school, have been jointly leading the school since April 2019.

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

- Abbeyfield is an inclusive school in which students and staff feel valued and cared for. Staff are vigilant about looking after students' individual academic and personal achievements as well as their well-being. The school is a 'Thrive' hub school and receives additional support for students' emotional well-being and mental health. Leaders successfully provide for groups of students such as those who are disadvantaged or who have SEND, the MYE and those who joined Year 7 with low skills in English and mathematics (known as 'building English and mathematics skills' or BEAMS).
- The school's innovative co-headship model works smoothly and effectively. The two headteachers work extremely well together and have divided up roles to best reflect their relative strengths. Staff and students understand the model and are very positive about the way that the school is being led and managed.
- The headteachers have established a strong and cohesive senior leadership team, many of whom are relatively new to their roles. As a result, new staff feel very well supported and praise the induction programme and open door policy of

senior staff. They appreciate the clear systems and policies and leaders' expectations, as set out in the school's 'lesson strategy' statements.

- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and what needs to improve. Their focus is firmly on improving the consistency of the quality of teaching and learning and raising standards of attainment for all students. There is a rigorous programme of monitoring by senior and middle leaders that has contributed to greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Heads of subject departments are clear about their roles and responsibilities and have benefitted from appropriate professional development. Middle leaders came across as enthusiastic, knowledgeable and committed to the school's ambitious vision for its students.
- The curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 is broad and balanced and enhanced by a wide range of relevant subject trips and events, such as the Bath mathematics master classes and university visits. There is a range of popular lunchtime and after-school clubs such as for sport, choir, homework, science and 'STEM'. A good number of students are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. There is an appropriate focus on opportunities for students' personal and character development and understanding of British values. Year 7 students keep track of how their character skills are developing and speak about this confidently.
- Leaders are undertaking a thorough review of the whole school curriculum. More students are opting for EBacc subjects. Sixth form students have a good range of subject and pathway options and benefit from recently introduced supervised study sessions.
- Leaders have devoted considerable thought and attention to the welfare of staff, for example, duties are kept to a minimum and 'well-being Mondays' introduced, which allow staff to go home early and with a 'no emails after 6 pm' rule.
- Continuous professional development for staff has been carefully planned with a strong focus on the Abbeyfield teaching and learning strategy. Teachers are encouraged to train as examiners, which they have found extremely beneficial. Leaders have compiled a useful compendium of best practice based on their monitoring of teaching and learning.

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

- ...there was a more consistent format for the subject curriculum maps, possibly using the good practice seen in English as a model.
- ...the self-evaluation and development plan were summarised more succinctly and concisely to make them more accessible to governors and external parties.
- ...leaders reviewed how and when the personal, social and health education curriculum was taught to ensure that it reflects the high expectations of teaching and learning seen in other curriculum areas.

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

- Relationships between staff and students are very positive and contribute to the calm purposeful atmosphere around the school. As a result, pupils confidently ask questions and seek help when they are unsure about something.
- Students enjoy their lessons and feel well supported by staff. They are polite and well behaved and show positive attitudes to learning across the school. Work is usually presented well in their books. In languages, where books are particularly neat and well-organised, students are given loyalty cards for good presentation.
- Routines are well established and understood by students. Lessons get off to a consistently prompt start with an introductory activity, shared learning outcomes and success criteria.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour and achievements. They encourage students to persevere and to aim high. Teachers set regular and often challenging homework, which helps to prepare students for their next phase of their education. Students are motivated by teachers' use of a differentiated approach to homework, involving 'starter, main and dessert' or different grades of spiciness, as seen in an English lesson.
- Teachers consistently apply the school's feedback policy, as seen in the way they provide feedback in students' books. In many subjects, teachers include detailed subject-specific comments to show how work could be improved. Students mainly respond well to teachers' feedback, using green pens, and are given 'DIRT' time to do this in lessons.
- Subjects are carefully planned to ensure progression in knowledge and skills across all year groups. Teachers, including in the sixth form, identify students' 'learning journeys' consistently well. As a result, students are clear about what they have learned, where they are currently and what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers demonstrate accurate and confident subject knowledge as well as a clear understanding of the curriculum and examination requirements. They are enthusiastic, using technical language well and expecting students to do the same. Students usually respond using correct subject terminology.
- Leaders have given a strong focus to literacy across the curriculum. Reading is encouraged and modelled well by teachers. There are also reading clubs, a well-resourced library and proactive librarian. Accelerated Reader successfully improved the reading ages of targeted students, mainly in Years 7 and 8. Teachers identify key words in lessons and recognise that students' difficulties with the meaning of words can be obstacles to their achievements in, for example, mathematics.
- Students' progress by the end of Key Stages 4 and 5 has generally been around the national average. Students have achieved particularly well in BTec and creative subjects. There was a dip across the board last year because of staffing issues, which have since been resolved. Leaders, including heads of subjects, have worked hard, including offering a range of after-school sessions, to ensure

better outcomes this year. Predictions are for improved results; students' work in books reflects this and is generally of a good standard.

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

- ...there was a more consistent approach to helping students retain and retrieve subject knowledge and understanding.
- ...teachers ensured that starting activities were more effectively differentiated so that the most able students, particularly, were suitably challenged.
- ...teachers' questioning was developed further to allow, for example, more thinking time for students and to employ a wider range of strategies as seen in some lessons, including follow-up probing questions or 'bouncing' them to other students.

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

- Leaders are very conscious that disadvantaged students have underachieved compared with their more advantaged peers. The progress and attainment of disadvantaged students, several of whom have additional needs, have been persistently below others in the school and nationally, despite the school's efforts and recognition locally as having effective practice in this area.
- Leaders have strengthened their approach to supporting disadvantaged students this year by, for example, identifying pupil premium 'champions' in each subject and oversight by the senior leadership team. There are clear expectations of how teachers should prioritise disadvantaged students in lessons and in their marking. Teachers are aware who the disadvantaged students are in their classes and adopt a 'first and best' approach by targeting questions to their disadvantaged students and ensuring that their work is marked first and 'best'. Leaders regularly monitor the impact of the approach to teaching disadvantaged students.
- The pupil premium plan appropriately identifies disadvantaged students' barriers to achievement and strategies to overcome them. In addition to the focus on ensuring strong 'quality first' teaching, the strategies include mentors for disadvantaged students, interventions for those who need them, smaller class sizes and targeted careers advice and guidance for these students. Disadvantaged students are prioritised by the attendance offer which has resulted in improvements in attendance in some cases. Parents' attendance at meetings has improved along with face to face meetings to discuss their children's progress.

- Leaders carefully consider the needs of other vulnerable groups, including those with SEND and those who join the school at times other than the start of Year 7 (the MYEs). In lessons, students with SEND receive appropriate and effective support, for example from teaching assistants. Some new MYE students spoke about how they have settled in and that they feel well looked after. Students who join with attainment that is below the expected standard are given extra support through the school's BEAMS classes in Year 7, which enables them to be taught in small groups and with a personalised approach. BEAMS has been recognised in a recent external review as having a significant impact.

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

...leaders continued to strive towards ensuring that disadvantaged students, including the most able, achieve the highest standards.

#### **5. Area of Excellence**

Not submitted for this review

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

Leaders are considering what further support they would like.

**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.**