



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW
REVIEW REPORT FOR
ST BRIGID'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOL

Name of School:	St Brigid's Catholic Primary School
Headteacher/Principal:	Rachael Tyler
Hub:	Aspire
School phase:	Primary
MAT (if applicable):	Not applicable

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Effective
Date of this Review:	23/01/2023
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Estimate
Date of last QA Review	4/05/2022
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	25/09/2019

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	Not applicable
Previously accredited valid areas of excellence	Not applicable
Overall peer evaluation estimate	Effective

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

St Brigid's is a one-form entry primary school situated near the border of Knowsley and Liverpool. The area is one of the most deprived in the country. Two-thirds of pupils are disadvantaged, and one-third have additional needs. Both these proportions are well above the national average, as is the number of pupils with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP), with sixteen existing plans and six pending. The number of pupils with English as an additional language is lower than average but increasing. The school is oversubscribed, not least due to its reputation for supporting pupils with various needs.

The Nursery includes two-year-old children and is housed in a building previously used as a community sports centre. This has been adapted to provide bespoke, well equipped learning areas for the two-year-olds and Nursery children. The sports hall is used for learning and soft-play and is equipped with lighting and sound systems for school productions. Wrap around care is provided for 50 weeks of the year for nursery children, with before and after school provision available for older pupils.

The main school was destroyed by fire some years ago and now has spacious classrooms and additional rooms for break out activities. Reception and Year 1 classrooms are on the ground floor. Both have stimulating indoor and outdoor learning areas to enable a smooth transition as children move to Year 1.

In addition to the nine class teachers, there are 16 teaching assistants, one of whom has the HLTA qualification. Also, there are currently nine apprentices.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Leadership at all levels is exceptionally strong. Led by the charismatic and visionary headteacher, the senior leadership team is a hotbed of imaginative ideas, informed by a high level of professional expertise. Middle leaders, including those responsible for subjects, and those who lead provision for disadvantaged pupils, and those with additional needs share a common determination to ensure all pupils do as well as possible.
- The team spirit across the school is palpable. Leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, apprentices, welfare assistants administrative and maintenance staff all contribute to the calm, purposeful learning environment. The Christian ethos underpins the curriculum and pervades school life, reflecting the school's motto, 'Trusting in God – we love, believe and achieve'.

- Relationships among and between adults and pupils are warm and supportive. This was acknowledged by the Wellbeing Award for Schools report, which included,
 - ‘...the whole school community has created a consistent welcoming, caring, supportive, happy, safe and aspirational culture and innovative ways of working’.
- Parents hold the school in high regard and greatly value the support provided for their children. ‘Wrap round care’ is not confined to the before and after-school provision; it permeates the school day. Staff respond sensitively when children’s vulnerabilities lead to emotional or behavioural issues.
- Senior leaders have an in-depth knowledge of individual pupils, and an unswerving determination that expectations remain high for all, whatever their circumstances. This is a significant factor in enabling pupils to overcome barriers and succeed against the odds.
- Senior leaders ensure that any proposed initiatives, such as the new phonics programme, are thoroughly researched and carefully planned. They ensure middle leaders have time to introduce and monitor improvements. They facilitate staff training, at the same time considering the workload of staff. For their part, staff feel valued and empowered, and have a justifiable confidence in their success in making a difference to children’s lives.
- The leadership of the provision for the early years is first-rate. The leader has considerable expertise and has developed a teaching team with an enviable reputation. The provision for the two-year-olds, Nursery, and Reception children is meticulously organised. Continuous professional development has resulted in all staff having a shared understanding of how young children learn.
- Subject leaders talk confidently and passionately about their subjects. They are clear about the progression of knowledge and skills from Nursery to Year 6. Currently they are developing insights into where activities for the two-year-olds might link to their subsequent learning. This is interesting work and has the potential for outreach work in other schools that provide for this age group.
- High quality professional development opportunities, provided in-house, by the local Knowsley network or by specialists, ensure all staff are well-informed. The impact of such training is evident across the school, for example in how early years staff model language for children.
- An extensive range of experiences, including visits and residential trips, help to broaden pupils’ experiences. Local visits and residential trips further afield, musical activities led by a specialist and participation in the Children’s University, are just some of the wide-ranging opportunities provided.

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

... leaders explored ways of sharing their exemplary practice, including the provision in the early years and developing curriculum intent for two-year-olds through to Year 6 pupils.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Children who enter the provision for two-year-olds, the Nursery, or Reception, typically have very low starting points. Outcomes vary from cohort to cohort due to the varying characteristics of the pupils. Currently, for example, 70% of pupils in three year groups are disadvantaged; the lowest proportion is 52%. A third of Year 6 pupils have additional needs. The big picture is that pupils generally make positive progress from their disparate starting points. This is due to the high quality of teaching and the engaging curriculum, underpinned by the all-round care and support pupils receive.
- A strong feature of the teaching across the school is how pupils' learning is supported through the combined efforts of teachers, teaching assistants, the learning mentor and apprentices. In most lessons there are three or four adults, all of whom are well-briefed and make a significant contribution to the calm and purposeful atmosphere.
- Staff in the early years provide a wide range of imaginative, stimulating resources and well-planned opportunities for children to develop in all areas. Seamless behaviour management underpinned by warm relationships mean children soon settle in to routines and enjoy learning. This was evident, for example, when eight two-year-old children were thoroughly absorbed when listening to a story. The teacher and a teaching assistant read expressively and used Makaton signing, succeeding in sustaining children's attention for a considerable period.
- The two-year-olds and Nursery children learn alongside one another at times and benefit from the extremely well designed indoor and outdoor learning areas. They confidently choose from the range of high-quality resources. Staff judiciously intervene in their activities, striking a balance between joining children and allowing them to develop independence, communication and collaborative skills.
- Children in Reception eagerly talked about what they are doing. One explained that he had made a treasure map and showed where the treasure was buried. Others told an animated version of 'The Three Little Pigs', delighting in reciting 'By the hair of my chinny, chin chin...'

- Pupils are making positive progress in phonics. Staff are well-versed in the recently introduced 'Twinkl' programme and adopt a consistent approach. They use the same technical vocabulary and engage pupils successfully using online animations and routines, such as 'I say/You say'.
- In phonics lessons and beyond, the current focus on developing oracy is paying dividends. This was evident during a Year 6 writing lesson during which staff had displayed objects, such as ice and musical instruments, that feature in the story. Oracy was promoted throughout the lesson with adults modelling language. Pupils were supported by key questions during group discussions. They were eager to find out about the text they were about to read. Whilst working, one pupil remarked, 'I'm glad I came to school today, I love this.'
- Pupils' English books reveal that they have frequent opportunities to write and develop stamina. There is clear progression through and across year groups. A new strategy for teaching writing is bearing fruit and planning highlights complementary opportunities to promote oracy.
- Learning activities are frequently practical and multi-sensory. During a Year 1 science lesson, pupils were discussing fruit and vegetables. They encouraged one another to touch and smell. 'This is so cool', commented one pupil. Oracy and practical work also feature strongly in mathematics. During a Year 5 lesson, pupils used the terms dividend and quotient as they manipulated Numicon to develop their understanding of short division.
- During all lessons observed, pupils were fully engaged and demonstrated well-established behaviour for learning. They showed considerable pride as they discussed their work. Pupils confidently explained how they use working walls and accessible resources to support their learning if they are struggling. One pupil remarked, 'Every mistake helps you improve the next time.'

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

- ... pupils were consistently able to orally rehearse the text they are planning to include in their writing.
- ... the current strategies to support pupils in their retention and recall of previous learning were fully embedded.

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

- Inclusion is a priority for all leaders. They exemplify the school's core belief that every pupil is unique and that each can contribute to the school's mission. Leaders have created an ethos of respect and empathy, where diversity is valued and celebrated. All staff are dedicated to ensuring that pupils are happy, safe, and ready to learn.
- Leaders' tenacious ambition to ensure all pupils overcome barriers to their learning and personal development is shared by all staff. Leadership of special educational needs is extremely strong. Two senior leaders share responsibility and are ably supported by a teaching assistant who acts as SENDCo for the two-year-olds. All three offer excellent role models for colleagues.
- Many staff, including teaching assistants, have developed high-level skills in supporting pupils with additional needs. As a result, these pupils typically play a full part in lessons, learning the same things as their peers due to discreet scaffolding and some adjustments to the curriculum. Pupils with complex emotional or behavioural difficulties benefit from sensitive support and encouragement.
- The learning mentor is always on hand to assist. She has developed a sense of mutual trust with parents and improving attendance owes much to her work with families. Leaders draw on the support of specialist agencies when required, but teachers and teaching assistants have developed their own skills in some areas, such as speech and language therapy and play therapy. Staff are also developing expertise in helping pupils who have experienced severe trauma.
- Whenever possible pupils with additional needs learn alongside their classmates, but breakout areas, such as the sensory room provide a haven for pupils who, from time-to-time, find it difficult to cope. Pupils with additional needs generally make rapid, and often exceptional progress towards their individual academic and/or developmental targets.
- Funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent wisely to ensure they participate in all the school has to offer. They benefit from the same range of real-life learning opportunities as their peers. Funding is used to enable disadvantaged pupils to participate in clubs, music lessons and trips, to ensure equitable access to cultural experiences.

- The school is working hard to diminish the differences in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Rich experiences support the development of their oracy skills and vocabulary which enhances their ability to progress across all subjects. Disadvantaged pupils are in the majority, which has an influence on assessment data. The fact that pupils' attainment by Year 6 is typically at least in line with national outcomes indicates the positive impact of the provision for all pupils.

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

The review did not identify any significant areas for improvement.

5. Area of Excellence

Not applicable

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>)