



VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP QUALITY
ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR
WILLOW DENE SCHOOL

Name of School:	Willow Dene School
Headteacher/Principal:	Rachel Harrison
Hub:	London Special and Alternative Provision Hub
School phase:	Special Academy
MAT (if applicable):	Compass Partnership of Schools

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this virtual Leadership Quality Assurance Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	08/03/2021
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Outstanding
Date of last QA Review	28/01/2019
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	05/12/2019



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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
School Improvement Strategies	Leading
Approach to recovery and remote learning	Not applicable
Area of Excellence	Not applicable
Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence	Not applicable
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

Willow Dene is a special school that serves Greenwich and surrounding local authorities. In the last year, the school remained fully open to support all children and their families, enabling up to 193 of the 255 pupils on roll to continue to attend.

Pupils at Willow Dene have significant learning difficulties. All have, or are undergoing assessment for, an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The school has a provision for two-year olds with complex needs (Toucan) in addition to an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) department and Key Stages 1 and 2 learners at one site and for Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils at another site nearby. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, who speak English as a second language and who are disadvantaged are all above the national average.

The school has National Autism Society accreditation and is a Movement for Learning and Life (MOVE) centre of excellence. Its last inspection report stated, "There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a Section 5 inspection now". The school works with other settings, universities, hospital trusts, companies and the Department for Education.

2.1 Leadership at all Levels - What went well

- Willow Dene's vision – '*Seeing possibilities, realising dreams*' - underpins high ambitions for its learners. This is shared by all staff and governors and reinforced in classroom displays created with learners.
- Leaders have developed a caring, inclusive learning culture where relationships are positive and encouraging. Families regularly share examples of the significant impact made by staff on their children's progress.
- Governors are effective and well-informed through weekly briefings and monitoring visits linked to aspects of development such as curriculum and communication.
- The line management structure makes explicit the roles and inter-dependent responsibilities of all staff. Senior leaders are highly accessible to staff, parents and pupils across both sites. They model behaviours that help realise the school's vision and objectives.
- Leaders gain excellent oversight of the impact of subject and other leaders through direct monitoring. The exemplary team work ensures accountabilities are consistently met, such as in developing the Time, People, Place and Culture curriculum area,
- The curriculum is planned coherently, integrating the school's innovative sensory provision to ensure learning is well structured and sequenced. Plans are implemented effectively as teachers, assistants and therapists work together to involve pupils, for example, in music therapy. Some core academic achievements

related to communication are currently recorded well in the school's 'Evidence for Learning' app.

- Within the overall curriculum framework, learning is based on children's individual interests to enhance engagement. For example, using a head-mouth pointer to construct a symbol sentence one boy shared that he liked building cars and being on the boat during swimming lessons.
- Career education is well planned, adopting the Gatsby benchmarks. From Key Stage 2, children work with community members in career focussed weeks. Older pupils enjoy career opportunities through enterprise projects and AQA unit awards.
- New staff are supported well through robust induction and ongoing work in class teams. They are paired with more experienced teachers and classes where their expertise best matches the range of pupils' learning needs.
- High quality professional development opportunities enhance staff expertise. Many are led by staff conducting their own research, such as a teacher focussing on reading development or a physiotherapist providing a symposium paper.
- Strong links with the community enhance provision. For example, effective links with local faith leaders have led to disabled pupils being able to learn through external visits about different religions. Similarly, links with the local hospital school ensure learners receive training before coming out of hospital.

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

...information about children's progress was transferred to the Evidence for Learning app for all areas of the academic curriculum to ensure more efficient communication about achievement from one class to the next.

3.1 School improvement strategies and the extent to which these address the needs of different groups of learners, especially disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs- What went well

- Leaders know the school exceptionally well. They use data and qualitative information to inform and drive improvement. Day-to-day monitoring processes and rigorous self-evaluation involving all staff ensure 'buy-in' to appropriate key priorities in the school improvement plan. Since the last review leaders have captured these processes in documentation for teachers, parents and others involved to explain the rapid improvements that continue to take place.
- Priorities are carefully linked to staff performance management and an increased range of on-going professional development since the last review. This improves teachers' subject knowledge and teaching skills, such as in building the sensory team support and training across the school.
- The school works collaboratively with specialists across the trust and elsewhere

to develop provision, such as in commissioning a recent careers review.

Consequently, curriculum progression frameworks and units are rich, ambitious and inclusive - as evident in children's creative work.

- Using 'Learning Journeys' that accommodate the needs and abilities of each individual, pupils assessed as having spiky profiles achieve well. This is because they are challenged at an appropriate level and encouraged to communicate about things that are important to them.
- Children listen to stories and learn to read wherever possible through school. In Key Stage 3 pupils have their own blogs. Composed by children and supported by staff, these blogs enable pupils to share their own news their views.
- Pupils' achievements are enhanced by involving families, including those sometimes harder to reach. Using questionnaires and discussions that can be repeated at home, children showed good levels of concentration and engagement when turning the pages of a holy book, responding to a headscarf by putting it on heads and reacting to bells and incense from a Hindu temple.
- With high quality planning, teachers hold children's attention by adopting approaches that match individual pupils' needs. One child, for example, responded particularly well to a male voice used when focussing on community relationships. Another pupil led interaction in a lesson after being captivated by a child-sized kufi hat.
- Care has been taken to adapt the curriculum so that it is accessible for all, including disadvantaged learners. The school has developed its own assessment systems which, for example, track communication, social interaction and functional skills. Case studies show disadvantaged pupils progress as well as their non-disadvantaged counterparts.

3.2 School improvement strategies and the extent to which these address the needs of different groups of learners, especially disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs - Even better if...

The review did not identify any significant EBIs in this area.

4.1 Approach to recovery and remote learning - What went well

- School support for learners and families has reinforced already strong relationships, boosted parental confidence and improved attendance during the pandemic.
- Staff have been creative and adaptable to ensure children are kept safe and their learning and emotional needs are met well. Outreach support has included loaning laptops and equipment, training parents to use them and online and concrete learning tailored to meet pupils' needs. Parents share that they have observed new qualities in their children and feel more empowered to support

them. One wrote, for example, “the trike bike has been a godsend!”.

- Vulnerable children and families are supported exceptionally well through weekly calls, family welfare logs and virtual safeguarding meetings. Deliveries are made to families unable to locate food their children can eat or medical supplies they need.
- Staff effectively monitor and help improve home learning, for example, by watching and giving pupils and their parents feedback on home learning, advising parents on how to help their children improve or by replying to parental records of learning. Consequently, pupils have continued to achieve during lock down.
- Leaders have responded well to higher levels of staff anxiety during lockdown by utilising those trained as mental health first aiders to be front line listeners. They have also provided well-received training, yoga and exercise sessions for all.

4.2 Approach to recovery and remote learning - Even better if...

The review did not identify any significant EBIs in this area.

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

Leader would like continued links with the London Special schools and AP hub within the Challenge Partners network.

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.

Schools can also 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 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.