

Name of School:	Brent Knoll School
Headteacher/Principal:	Andy Taylor
Hub:	London AP Special
School phase:	Special school for ages 4 to 16
MAT (if applicable):	N/A

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leaders elected to have verbal estimates.
Date of this Review:	15/11/2023
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Leading
Date of last QA Review	25/01/2023
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	15/06/2019

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 Verbal estimate given

Quality of provision and outcomes Verbal estimate given

AND

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

Area of excellence Accredited

Previously accredited valid areas of excellence N/A

Overall peer evaluation estimate Verbal estimate given

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

The school has 162 pupils aged 4 to 16 on roll. Over a third are disadvantaged. They all have education, health and care plans (EHCPs) and complex social, communication and interaction difficulties including autism. Three quarters are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a quarter are learning English as an additional language. There is a pilot project, working with the local authority, now entering its second year, with eight places for Year 12 pupils who need further time to prepare for the next stage of education or training.

Pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 follow three flexible curriculum pathways— Tor, Dune, or Knoll. Pupils are taught in their class groups, which are allocated according to social interaction, ability, and curriculum pathway.

The new building opened in 2015 and has been specifically designed as a low arousal environment. The school values of responsibility, respect, kindness, fairness, and honesty, underpin all relationships and the curriculum.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The senior leadership team work well together to ensure that the school is continually improving. The governing body has recently reorganised its structure so that governors' monitoring visits closely correlate with subcommittee responsibilities and these are aligned with school improvement plan priorities. This enables governors to check the work of the school effectively.
- Senior leaders are very experienced and fulfil their leadership responsibilities well. Responsibilities are clearly allocated and leaders hold each other to account for the developments they are working on.
- Leaders have worked closely with the local authority and the other special schools in the borough to ensure that the admissions criteria for each school are specific and the provision in the school is designed to meet the needs of the pupils. The current pilot project for Year 12s will be extended as it has clearly benefited the students who have moved on to college placements successfully.
- Leaders have worked in partnership with other schools to devise a stepped assessment system which ensures that ambitious targets are set for pupils so

that they make continual progress. Pupils' social and personal development is assessed alongside their academic achievement, and provision is planned and matched to the targets set ensuring holistic progress. The personal development framework is used to provide small steps towards the longer-term goals of the EHCP targets.

- The assessment data is used well by leaders to identify any slowing of the progress that is expected for individual or cohorts, so that additional bespoke programmes are put in place to meet these needs. For example, individual reading programmes provide an opportunity to develop reading skills as well as a mentoring opportunity to build self-esteem and confidence.
- Leaders have prepared a weekly session that provides training for teachers new to the school and refresher opportunities for other staff. Makaton signing training, autism friendly classrooms and effective strategies to use with pupils are among the topics that are covered. This ensures consistency of the teaching approaches used across the school.
- Leaders have a robust process for evaluating the quality of teaching through the teachers' standards and the appraisal system. Leaders check this by always observing lessons with a colleague and evaluating the progress of pupils.
- Leaders work successfully with parents to help them support their children at home. Regular parent forums give parents the opportunity to meet. The home school support staff work highly effectively with families, particularly when they are facing additional challenges.

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

... leaders further developed knowledge of the assessment systems for all staff so that they can confidently communicate what they are doing, why they are doing it and how it drives and informs planning and provision.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- The youngest children enthusiastically participate in activities that enable them to learn initial letter sounds. Phonic skills are taught consistently to support pupils' reading, and pupils enjoy reading in class every morning when they arrive in school. Individual pupils receive support for reading if their progress slows.

- Teachers illustrate and explain concepts well through photographs and objects. They make learning fun and relevant for pupils. Those in Years 3 and 4 eagerly identified a 'mistake' a member of staff had made in measuring accurately. They counted blocks and understood how to make sure they were in the same starting place when measuring an object.
- Pupils in Year 10 recalled the sequence of lessons and the skills they had learnt when making each item in food technology. The teacher linked the items they were making with their current topic, the Victorians, and how afternoon tea was used. Pupils independently retrieved the equipment they needed to use the rubbing-in method for scones. They explained how that was different from the other methods they had learnt.
- Teachers use effective strategies to gain pupils' attention and reinforce learning. This is particularly evident for students on the sensory pathway. Familiar songs and routines help pupils engage well in the learning.
- The most able pupils achieve GCSEs and all the pupils who leave at the end of Year 11 are well supported through the transition to college courses. Pupils have been successful in apprenticeship schemes and one has returned as a learning support assistant for physical education after success in an apprenticeship at an English football league club.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop social, cooperative and workplace skills in community settings. Some help with younger children as part of their community service for the Duke of Edinburgh award, for example. Some pupils help at the local foodbank and all participate in work experience. They explain the skills they have gained and communicate confidently.
- Pupils in the sixth form are gaining skills quickly to enable them to attend college courses. They describe how their skills at relating to people in different places are improving.
- Pupils are elected by their peers to the pupil forum. This group is supported effectively by staff and enables all pupils to contribute their opinions to community involvement and development of the school. Pupils proudly recounted how they had raised money for guide dogs for the blind after hearing there was a shortage. They know the charities they have decided to support and enthusiastically put forward ideas for fundraising activities.

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

- ... curriculum coordinators supported colleagues in their knowledge of subject pedagogy, based on current research, to further support the effective delivery of the curriculum.

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

- All the pupils have additional needs and leaders identified girls, who are in a minority, as a subgroup for the review to focus on.
- Girls take an active part in the classes. Leaders ensure they are not isolated in classes and this actively encourages supportive friendships to be formed. Leaders have ensured these can be maintained as pupils move through the school.
- Girls in Years 3 and 4, for example, eagerly contributed in a mathematics lesson explaining why measurements were inaccurate. They worked together well with their partner to measure an object.
- Girls participate well in the activities available. They enjoy responsibilities in the primary playground at lunch time, explaining how they play with the younger pupils. They particularly enjoy 'Makaton Choir', eagerly learning and memorising the tune, words and signs for popular songs being prepared for public performances.
- The school has used a movement and dance therapeutic programme for several years. The well-qualified and experienced staff who deliver the programme provide excellent opportunities for pupils with significant sensory needs to exercise and participate in small group activities. These pupils excel and demonstrate skills that are less evident in normal class activities.
- The bespoke work with each pupil characterises all aspects of the school and ensures that pupils who are more vulnerable or further disadvantaged by their individual circumstances receive all the help they need. There are many examples of pupils overcoming difficulties and becoming confident young people who are ready to play an active part in their local community.

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

- ... staff explored and extended how creative therapeutic approaches can be applied more widely in lessons to further promote pupils' learning.

5. Area of Excellence

Creating and maintaining a low arousal environment that supports autistic pupils' self-regulation, learning and transitions at all levels, promoting independence with reference to support in mainstream schools

Accredited

5.1 Why has this area been identified as a strength? What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

- School leaders have developed this approach which started as a result of the carefully considered plans for the new building but now is embedded in the processes, procedures, and consistency of interactions within the whole school community. The 'low arousal' approach is based on extensive research on the sensory needs of autistic pupils.
- The building is designed with 'low arousal' as a fundamental principle, with wide corridors and consistent classroom arrangements. However, the layout and flexibility of furnishings within classrooms are replicable in any situation. This is bespoke to individuals within class groups, depending on their sensory needs and is characterised by minimal display or visual stimulus. The primary library is of note. The books are stored in cupboards and the display of books is minimised and frequently changed.
- The 'low arousal approach' extends far beyond the building to the pedagogy of the consistent application of techniques that support pupils' self-regulation and transitions. Pupils' passports summarise the communication and sensory needs of individual pupils showing the best ways to communicate, the ways pupils self-regulate and situations to avoid arousal.
- Teachers understand the importance of creating a safe and predictable learning environment for pupils using visual timetables, first-next-then boards, and regular and clear routines, to support their understanding and regulation. This is grounded in the TEACCH approach— physical structure, scheduling, work systems, routine, and visual structure— and complements the low arousal-based approach to teaching. This helps pupils develop their focus, concentration, and communication skills. Teachers manage all aspects of transition within the classroom, between classes and phases in the school and preparation for the next stage of education or training. All these

transitions are meticulously planned and pupils are exposed to changes incrementally as they move up through the school.

- Teachers also deliver 'Attention Autism' sessions across the school with increasing numbers of staff becoming skilled in the delivery of attention grabbing and holding activities that encourage the development of inquisitive minds and independence in learning tasks. These techniques and all procedures and strategies are regularly disseminated to colleagues working in mainstream schools and specially resourced units. Staff frequently provide training, advice and support for colleagues in early years provisions and other settings.

5.2 What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?

- Pupils make excellent progress in understanding their own and other's particular sensory needs. They learn to self-regulate and cope with all aspects of transition within classrooms, through classroom routines, structure, and organisation. They make the transitions successfully to different situations within the school day, and as they mature, they become increasingly resilient and cope well with the transition to the next stage of education. The training provided by school staff for colleagues in mainstream and in early years settings across the local authority has had impact on the inclusion and progress of many children and young people.

5.3 What is the name, job title and email address of the staff lead in this area?

Sarah Lynch, deputy headteacher.
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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>)