

Written Report

CHALLENGE PARTNERS: Quality Assurance Review Written Report

Name of School:	St Catherine's RC Primary School
School Address:	Vale Drive, Barnet EN5 2ED
Hub School:	Compton Hub

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Unique Reference Number:	101333
Local Authority:	Barnet
Type of School:	Primary
School Category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3–11
Number on roll:	467
Head teacher/Principal:	Eileen Quigley

Date of last Ofsted inspection:	30 April 2009
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	1 (Outstanding)

Date of Quality Assurance Review:	6–7 March 2014
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QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW – SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES

School Improvement Strategies: Outstanding
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Achievement is: Outstanding

Quality of Teaching: Outstanding

Area of Excellent Practice:

EYFS Confirmed

Leadership Confirmed

Overall Review Evaluation

The Quality Assurance Review found indicators that St Catherine’s appears to be firmly within the Outstanding grade as judged in the school’s previous Ofsted report [April 2009].

Information about the school

- This school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils entitled to support from pupil premium is lower than average.
- An above average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, especially White European.
- The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is around average.

School Improvement Strategies

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- Evaluation, planning and data are crisply and clearly presented. Key actions and priorities are identified and evaluated thoroughly.
- Leadership is being developed well at all levels. Within the highly positive staff culture, actions identified for improvement are linked to very inclusive professional development of staff. There is lively engagement with current research into teaching and learning.
- As a defining characteristic of school improvement, the school is affiliated with a wide range of partners and professional networks. Middle leaders speak animatedly about the benefits partnership working brings, and feel that by being challenged to assist other schools they are at the forefront of innovative practice. The school has demonstrated capacity to improve other schools as well as to constantly pursue its own development.
- The curriculum is well-developed and resourced. Developments, such as increased pupil engagement and responsibility, have not been at the expense of core skills. Innovative practice has resulted in sustained improvement by the end of all key stages. Currently the school is focusing on strengthening high-level reading.
- Many staff have been “home-grown” within the school, starting as teaching assistants or volunteers. The middle leaders display a high level of loyalty and they feel that they are empowered to contribute to school improvement. For example, the decision to introduce mixed-ability grouping originated from the assessment coordinator. Delegation has made more time for senior leaders to rigorously monitor and maintain quality.
- The enthusiasm and dedication of the leadership team is infectious. The voices of staff, pupils, governors and auxiliary staff are heard and there is a strong sense of collegiality. There is a climate of mutual trust: “People support each other and always have time for each other”.

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- achievement of teaching school status can provide even wider opportunities for professional development and sharing innovative practice.

Pupil Achievement

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- The school has now established a consistent trend of significantly above average attainment and progress at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2. Data shows that in all year groups, a majority of pupils are making better than normal progress and no pupils are seriously underachieving.
- The school extends its expectations of “high ability performance” to a wider range of children than usual.
- In order to increase achievement of Level 6, especially in reading, the school is collaborating with an English specialist secondary teacher from the Hub school.
- The introduction of “hot/spicy/mild” task differentiation, and the removal of ability groups, has caused pupils to expect more of themselves. An emphasis on assessing their own learning and peer teaching ensures that all pupils gain understanding when they tackle more challenging work.
- Support for pupils through “Project X” is greatly assisting the progress in reading of any pupils who do not master phonics well enough in Year 1.
- In 2013 results, there was a gap in attainment between pupils supported by pupil premium and others at the end of Key Stage 1, but by the end of Key Stage 2 this gap had been eliminated. Now tracking data reveals very little difference between groups of pupils in any year group. The transitions between Reception and Year 1 and from Key Stage 1 to Key stage 2 are accomplished without loss of pace of progress.
- Year group teachers are expected to analyse data and plan in-lesson strategies to support pupils showing signs of making slower progress. Out-of-class interventions led by teaching assistants supplement and boost progress effectively. This very direct involvement of all staff is securing very good progress all round.
- Very good expertise and high quality resources have maintained high levels of progress in an expanded Early Years setting, showing that the school can cope with growth without sacrificing quality.

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- ...the school continues to exercise the vigilance that is currently enabling it to respond rapidly and effectively to any emerging sign of underachievement.
- ...in-depth involvement in using assessment data enables teachers to become even more confident in identifying where planning can promote better progress.

Quality of teaching

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- Teaching is consistently good and very often outstanding.
- Very well planned teaching leads over time to outstanding levels of engagement. Pupils are interested in what they are learning and are very confident in responding to questions and discussing their learning.
- “Talking partners” are changed regularly so that pupils gain a good balance of discussion and collaboration.
- Joint planning by year group teachers benefits pupils in experiencing a common curriculum and deepens the creative and imaginative approaches that teachers take to topics.
- Teaching assistants are empowered to take an effective role in lessons because planning is shared and strategies to meet pupils’ needs are clear and effective.
- When intervention support takes place out of class, it is very well taught and pupils are enabled to catch up rapidly.
- Marking is very regular and often provides pupils with clear guidance and opportunities to reflect on and use advice given.
- Literacy and numeracy are well represented in topic work and religious education and in personal targets, so that gains in knowledge in English and mathematics lessons are consistently reinforced. Writing and counting opportunities abound in fun ways in the Early Years setting.
- The school provides a book rich environment including an attractive library and pupils talk enthusiastically about reading.
- Art, music and PE are well represented in the curriculum. A whole class was learning to play clarinet together and reviewers were treated to a well choreographed dance performed with grace and enthusiasm by pupils from different year groups.
- St Catherine’s has evolved a very positive approach to monitoring and feeding back on teaching. The mutual trust and the support offered encourages teachers to take bold and worthwhile approaches that make learning interesting.

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- ...after observing outstanding lessons, teachers feel free to identify “even better ifs”: not in the sense that the lesson quality is thereby lessened, but because seeing such positive learning provides a springboard for discussing additional ideas to be tried at other times.

Quality of Area of Excellent Practice

Both the Early Years Foundation Stage and middle leadership were confirmed areas of excellence at the previous Challenge Partners review in 2012. Nothing is allowed to stand still at St Catherine’s and typically both areas of excellence have extended their strength and reach.

In EYFS there is now an even stronger transition to Year 1 in terms of enquiry-based learning and assessment. Free-flow between classrooms will soon be possible. The impact has already been positive on progress of all groups. In Reception, there is an innovative approach to recording learning through capturing on tablets images of children working and appending parent-friendly assessment comments. These are stored on the school’s website so that parents can access the record by a strictly personalised, password-protected contact and follow their child’s progress.

Leadership focused on the development of middle leaders at the last review, but as commented above, in terms of planning and assessment, the school has extended the focus to all teachers and to teaching assistants. As the school’s networks grow, middle leaders and class teachers take on more responsibility for outreach work. For example, one teacher is entirely responsible for inducting GTP and PGCE students. She has made very strong links with the London Institute which is keen to make use of her developing expertise.

Furthermore, interesting research is taking place with the London Institute into developing the role and contribution of teaching assistants, building on some of the good practice already in place at St Catherine’s. This is likely to be of great interest to other Challenge Partners schools and could be nominated as an area of excellence in a future review.

Partnerships

The school contributes to and benefits from a very wide range of partnerships. The Headteacher has good contact and influence with local headteachers and supports a mutual scheme that retains high quality consultants. Links with the London Institute for induction and recruitment of new teachers are strong. The school contributes to Challenge Partner reviews and participates in and is training to

facilitate the Outstanding Teacher programme as well as using NCSL courses. Having gained NLE and NSS status the Head and a wide range of her staff have assisted a school in special measures and another school through an interim executive headship.

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.