QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR BRENT KNOLL SCHOOL

Name of School:	Brent Knoll
Headteacher/Principal:	Paul Shaw
Hub:	London Special and AP Hub
School phase:	Early Years to Key Stage 5
MAT (if applicable):	Brent Knoll and Watergate Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	09/02/2026
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	Leading
Date of last QA Review:	15/11/2023
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	27/11/2024

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Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising host school leaders and visiting reviewers, agrees that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

Leadership at all levels	Leading
Quality of provision and outcomes	Leading
AND	
Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with additional needs	Leading
Area of excellence	N/A
Previously accredited valid areas of excellence	Creating and maintaining a low arousal environment that supports autistic pupil's self-regulation, learning and transitions at all levels, promoting independence with reference to support in mainstream schools.
Overall peer evaluation estimate	Leading

Important information

- The QA Review provides a peer evaluation of a school's practice in curriculum, teaching and learning, and leadership. It is a voluntary and developmental process, and the peer review team can evaluate and offer 'peer evaluation estimates' based only on what the school chooses to share with them.
- The QA Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades. The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is developmental not judgmental.
- The QA Review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. If you choose to share this report, or extracts thereof, externally (e.g. on your website or with parents), please ensure that it is accompanied with the following text:

  Challenge Partners is a charity working to advance education for the public benefit. We are not a statutory accountability body. The QA Review does not audit schools' safeguarding or behaviour policies and practices. However, Lead Reviewers and visiting reviewers are expected to follow Challenge Partners' safeguarding policy and report any concerns as set out in the procedures.

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1. Context and character of the school

Brent Knoll School provides specialist provision for learners from Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to Key Stage 5. The sixth form offers eight places for one year. All the learners have education, health and care plans (EHCPs) for complex social, communication and interaction difficulties. Just over three quarters of learners have diagnoses of autism. The proportion of learners who are further disadvantaged is much higher than in most other schools. The proportions of learners who have English as an additional language or who have heritages other than English are also above most other schools.

The building, purposefully designed to be low arousal, opened in 2015. The school moved in later that year. Due to demand for places the school operates slightly above its planned admission number of eight learners a class from Year R to Year 11.

The school is in the informal Trust, 'Brent Knoll and Watergate'. Leaders also meet with colleagues in the four other special schools in Lewisham. Documentation presents the school's values as responsibility, respect, kindness, fairness and honesty.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Leaders inspire the whole school community to uphold the overall motto, 'Be the best that we can be', through high expectations, very positive, supportive relationships, ongoing, purposeful learning, being ready and well prepared for lessons and proactive care of each other and the school environment. The school has a highly positive, calm environment, learners are happy and the low-arousal physical environment is extremely conducive for all.
- School values of responsibility, respect, kindness, fairness and honesty prevail, helping the progress and development of all. Leaders, learners and staff speak honestly and positively about their time there. One leader said, 'Everyone will help you if you need it, that's why I have stayed so long', whilst a learner said, 'I am a kind person but sometimes the kindness slips away'.
- Subject coordinators have increasing responsibility for continuous professional development (CPD). These leaders collaborate to share, develop and coordinate to improve the subject knowledge and pedagogy of teaching staff. They spoke positively and knowledgeably about their subjects, reporting how good it was to see fruits of their training in colleagues' lessons.

- Leaders are currently working towards 'Artsmark'. This focus on creativity, art and culture, within the broader curriculum, is implemented imaginatively and sensitively. One leader reported that this was helping her become more reflective and strategic in her teaching and promoting learners' enjoyment and mental health. Learners have made ceramic models of Ganesh in Religious Education and made three-dimensional models of islands as well as acting out 'The Tempest'.
- The broad, coherent curriculum is enriched well through frequent visits and visitors. 'Safari Pete' is a particular favourite. Learners spoke knowledgeably and enthusiastically about the boa constrictor, monitor lizard, barn owl, ferret and crocodile which he has brought to the school. His visit inspires learners' knowledge as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Strong links with other schools and the wider community enhance learning even further. Staff and learners enjoy their Makaton and Mini Makaton choirs. They have performed at many venues including Blackheath Halls, Catford Broadway, a church and the O2. Learners have also been to galleries, theatres and opera houses.
- The immaculate purposefully designed building adds to the very positive climate for learning. Leaders have adapted this to meet the changing needs of the curriculum and cohorts. The two libraries, one for Key Stages 1 and 2 and the other for Key Stages 3 and 4, are very inviting, well-stocked with a wide range of good quality books and enhanced by cosy well-lit reading pods.
- Leaders and staff take a holistic view of learners' journeys through the school. Destinations, knowledge and skills for later life and learning are paramount. Many older learners undertake work experience in the community through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and others gain experience through working in the school. Past learners now work as mid-day assistants in the school, one volunteers in class and another is a bus driver.

2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if…

… leaders found an even clearer and more succinct way to present all the strengths of their provision and outcomes.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- The school's broad, sequential, bespoke curriculum, based on the National Curriculum, is adapted to the interests and needs of its learners and highly enriched to promote enjoyment and motivation. Teaching staff know how subjects fit together over time and what the purpose of learners' work is. For example, skills in food technology from an early stage ultimately lead to a Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) accreditation in Home Cooking Skills at Levels 1 and 2.
- Expectations and aspirations are high. Teaching staff notice learners' interests and aptitudes and build on these. More able learners in a mathematics lesson were taken from a class session for more challenging work on 3-dimensional (3-d) shapes. This provided further challenge and the opportunity to excel.
- The whole school environment enhances learners' regulation and development. A well planned and tended sensory garden enables them to feel and smell plants, including herbs, whilst they relax outside at break and lunch times.
- Reading has a high priority in all classes. Learners in the EYFS, Key Stage 1, and throughout the school where needed, follow a certified phonics scheme. Learners demonstrate an interest in and love of reading. Strong progress over time is evident. A group of boys in Year 11 enjoyed a guided reading session during Every Child Reading in Class (ERIC).
- Very well-established daily routines and visual timetables contribute to learners' confidence, behaviour and highly positive attitudes to school. Teachers plan and prepare lessons well. Learners in Key Stage 1 confidently greeted each other by name in the morning routine.
- Resources are plentiful, high quality and accessible. Teachers make good use of these; learners take care of them. A group of older learners washed up responsibly and diligently after making chicken chow mein in a food technology lesson. Word banks and written questions successfully scaffolded writing, enabling learners to complete an evaluation of the lesson.
- Learners' books in all subjects are well-presented, tidy and good quality. Those who are ready learn to use cursive script from a young age. The books all follow the same systems including visual learning objectives, worksheets and marking codes, providing clear standardised expectations throughout the school. This familiar structure effectively helps learners' progress and confidence.

- The aspirations of leaders and teaching staff for learners are evident in their provision of tests across the school. For example, any learners who are potentially able undertake the Year 1 and 2 phonics checks, Year 4 multiplication tables, Duke of Edinburgh Award, a range of BTECs, Entry Levels, Functional skills and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs).
- Learners have positive self-image and are proud of their achievements. They enjoy school. Attendance is above the national average. One learner said, 'I love maths. I'm a genius at maths', whilst another gleefully said, ''I think I'm a little bit clever!'
- Leaders and staff know learners exceptionally well. They understand their aptitudes, triggers and strategies to pre-empt dysregulation. They are ambitious for them and give a lot of trust. Copious amounts of windows within the school enable independence to be fostered. One young learner was next to the classroom doorway when visitors wanted to exit. Although reluctant to open the door in case he went out, the teacher knew that the learner would not leave the room. The teacher opened the door, the boy waved goodbye to the visitors and watched them walk up the corridor but, indeed, did not leave. This showed how well even the youngest are at developing confidence and independence.

3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if…

… leaders and staff refined their work on 'zones of regulation' so that this is even more meaningful and effective.

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

- All staff take responsibility for provision and outcomes of learners in their classes, including those who are most disadvantaged or who have the most complex needs. They know learners well and deliver on-going, consistent and effective support. This was seen during the secondary assembly where some of the most vulnerable were offered bespoke support from a range of staff.
- Learning support assistants are integral to learners' development and wellbeing, especially to those who are most disadvantaged or have the most complex SEND. They work with individuals, small groups and often provide calm support to help the most vulnerable learners in whole class times. A boy with particularly complex needs was supported to engage in a whole class

lesson because a learning supporting assistant sat beside him, helped focus his attention and explained key words where needed.

- Learners who are most disadvantaged or have the most complex needs progress in line with their peers. Rates of progress overall are often in the top ten per centile of all schools. This is because relationships are so positive and encouraging, aspirations are high and support is nurturing and effective.
- Total communication is central in and out of lessons. This particularly helps those with the most complex SEND. All teaching and support staff learn Makaton and an increasing number are using signing to support the spoken word. The use of symbols is well-established.
- Attention Autism and its underlying principles help all learners, particularly those with the most complex needs. This promotes engagement, communication, social interaction and independence. An example of this was where learners in a Year R lesson used mathematics, social interaction and a cross-curricula link with Valentine's Day to identify the number of legs on a lovebug.
- The wellbeing of all leaders, staff, learners and families is promoted and supported, including those who are disadvantaged or have the most complex SEND. The fulltime pastoral lead contributes significantly to this. She visits all learners before they start at the school, along with the EYFS leader where appropriate, including those who are most disadvantaged. This gives her a secure understanding of the holistic background of all individuals which she shares with others, enabling them to understand and meet bespoke needs well.
- Leaders provide a range of training, including non-violent resistance (NVR) training for parents and families. This is helpful for all families including those who are most challenged or disadvantaged. It successfully helps parents to support their children in a calm, positive way. As one parent said, '"The course helped me to understand how to de-escalate aggressive behaviour and make a happy home'.

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

… leaders further developed links with past learners to inspire those currently at the school, especially those who are most disadvantaged or have the most complex needs.

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 content reports from across the partnership of schools and trusts including using AI tools to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector (sharing these with the partnership) each year. The QA Review reports remain confidential to Challenge Partners and the host school. This ensures that schools embrace the review as a development process, acting as a catalyst for their ongoing improvement. This is the primary purpose of the QA review. However, our aim is that the thematic analysis will demonstrate the additional value of a sector wide overview, illustrated with real-life examples.

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 partnership of schools. The School Support Directory 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)