



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR RIVERWALK SCHOOL

Name of School:	Riverwalk School
Headteacher:	Jan Hatchell
Hub:	East Coast Hub
School phase:	Special
MAT:	Believe Engage Succeed Trust (BEST)

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	LEADING
Date of this Review:	09/06/2021
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	GOOD
Date of last QA Review	16/01/2019
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	GOOD
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	12/10/2016



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Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising of host school leaders and visiting reviewers agree 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 pupils with additional needs LEADING

Area of Excellence Not offered at this review

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

Riverwalk is a popular, expanding special school, educating 185 pupils from the ages of 2 to 19 years. All pupils (except nursery children) have education, health and care plans (EHCPs). The main special educational needs catered for are profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD), autism spectrum conditions (ASC), and social, emotional and mental health issues (SEMH). The demand for places continues to grow and the school will expand further in September 2021 to 200 pupils.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is accommodated on a separate site and there is a separate building on site housing post-16 students. The purpose built, main school building is well thought out and well equipped, with wide corridors and high quality, flexible, learning accommodation. Riverwalk Assess Intervene Support Engagement (RAISE) currently educates four pupils with exceptionally complex needs. These pupils benefit from excellent support and have opportunities to integrate with pupils on the main site.

The headteacher of Riverwalk is the chief executive officer of the BEST multi academy trust, set up in February 2019, comprising a pupil referral unit and a special school. The Riverwalk vision is to create a highly effective provision that adapts to the needs of pupils and their families.

2.1 Leadership at all Levels - What went well

- Leaders have thoughtfully and fully addressed the even better ifs from the previous review.
- Leaders at Riverwalk are fully committed to improving outcomes in and beyond the school. Leaders at all levels are supporting their partners in the Trust. There is a trust wide strategy to be effective in the community to make individuals and organisations more effective and resilient. The inspirational headteacher has many roles where she directly influences local statutory services.
- The highly visible senior leadership team have a clear vision for the school, which they model and demonstrate every day. They have created a powerful culture of professional curiosity and person-centred support, which enables staff at all levels to develop their competence and confidence to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have built a school with a palpable ethos of respect and care. Teaching staff are encouraged to be brave and innovative. Staff at all levels are willing to go the 'extra mile,' to support pupil welfare and learning. During this review, staff at all levels arranged to support a pupil in crisis by supporting them in school over the following weekend.

- Governors are well equipped to support and challenge leaders. They are visible within the school and have given additional support to the school when the headteacher, the CEO of the Trust, had to give more of her time to other parts of the Trust and occasionally during incidences of behaviours of concern.
- Leaders promote well-being by having high expectations of and investment in staff at all levels, to develop their competence, confidence and job satisfaction. Leaders expect a lot from staff but fully support them in times of need. Senior leaders take their turn in supporting pupils and families in crisis, leading by example and sharing the load. Staff are encouraged to develop themselves using their strengths and interests. Mental health first aiders across the school support well-being. Professional development days are well targeted to pupil needs and cover well-being.
- The well-structured curriculum and the use of experts on how pupils learn, in the staff team, have resulted in expert subject knowledge and pedagogy. The teaching team is highly skilled. The developmental curriculum derived from Social Communication, Emotional Regulation, and Transactional Support (SCERTS), alongside the engagement profile, delivered in curriculum pathways, is highly effective in focusing teaching, resulting in consistently strong pupil progress. Leaders are further refining curriculum pathways, continuously improving pupil outcomes.
- Leaders know the strengths and needs of their team as they monitor teaching rigorously. They have a strong presence in classrooms. Due to the clear targets, trust and support, arising from performance reviews, subject leaders are highly effective in planning, delivering and monitoring teaching and learning.
- The work to support and improve pupil and family resilience, by liaising with families, health, and social care professionals, is particularly strong.

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

...leaders developed leaders at all levels to become more strategic in their leadership in order to further improve practice in and beyond Riverwalk.

3.1 Quality of Provision and Outcomes - What went well

- Due to deep subject knowledge, a clear understanding of pupils' needs, trusting relationships and brave teaching, there is a strong, positive culture for learning, across the school. Teaching staff provide optimum support and challenge to pupils to maximise learning.
- Well thought-out routines allow pupils to take full advantage of the wide range of learning opportunities offered. Transitions are well planned and generally seamless. For example, a pupil in a primary engagement class used sensory regulation strategies, a twiddler and a 'now and next' board to make a successful transition.

- As pupils move up the school, they take on more responsibility. For example, a Key Stage 4 class planned their class gym, painting the walls and laying floor tiles.
- The visual environment is well thought out, clear and uncluttered. Visual supports are well used to support learning. For example, a Year 1 pupil was seen checking who was in class. All pupils in this class used the 'who is here' board as part of their routine, which involved writing their name.
- A teaching assistant (TA) communication champion in each class, supports the well-planned augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) personalised techniques, which are well used across the school. The range of systems in place include objects of reference, 'now and next' boards, visual timetables, shape coding, signing, and sensory markers.
- Physical education sessions are well supported by sports coaches, working alongside school staff. The sessions are personalised. For example, one class likes to calm at the end of their session to a video from 'Frozen.' In another session, a young man with SLD showed amazing accuracy when throwing balls into a basketball hoop from some distance and clearly showed pride in his achievement. A young man with PMLD successfully 'shot hoops,' developing aim, focus and physical skills.
- Teaching staff at all levels take pride in their work. Lessons are well organised, following concise and easy to understand plans. Teaching staff were confident and articulate in discussing the rationale and impact of sensory circuits.
- Recently the sensory integration support to pupils has been significantly improved. Staff are more aware of sensory needs and how to meet them, resulting in increased 'on task' behaviour and reduced incidents of behaviours of concern. For example, a pupil in a Key Stage 2 partnership class used a rotating chair in a mathematics lesson and calmly moved to a quiet room with a computer to eat his snack.
- Due to trusting relationships, pupils being understood and the implementation of the Norfolk Steps programme, behaviour support is a strength of the school. Leaders are developing and understanding 'trauma informed education.' Pupils have access to personalised safe places. A pupil who was angry and upset, after a 'difficult' start to his day, was calmly supported to engage in sensory circuits after initial reluctance. After a short time, he calmed, engaged, and completed the activity with a smile.
- TAs have strong subject knowledge and a good understanding of how the pupils learn. A Year 1 phonics session was ably led by TAs, engaging and inspiring pupils, to develop and apply their phonic knowledge.
- The outcomes of pupils with EHCPs outcomes are more aligned to the curriculum. Progress is strong across the school.
- Attendance is above average for schools with similar cohorts. Leaders are supportive of families but make boundaries to promote school attendance. Leaders provide strategies for escorts and drivers to promote attendance in pupils who have issues with school transport.

3.2 Quality of Provision and Outcomes - Even better if...

...learning from a review of best practice of AAC were used to ensure that every child's voice is fully heard and has increased influence on all aspects of their lives in school and beyond.

4.1 Quality of Provision and Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - What went well

- The Riverwalk community includes a significant proportion of pupils with complex medical conditions which make them extremely vulnerable, as well as pupils with life-limiting conditions.
- During the Covid -19 pandemic, teaching staff provided education, moral and practical support to children and their families.
- As with almost all schools, leaders learned from the first lockdown and complemented their online offer with doorstep calls. Teaching staff noticed that on return to school some pupils had lost weight and skills. Where appropriate, statutory services were engaged, to check on the safety of vulnerable pupils and to support their families.
- Pupils who were shielding, or whose parents were worried by Covid-19, have been supported back to school, by reassurance and support and, for example, with temporary part-time timetables
- One pupil found returning to school difficult because at home he lived in a calm simple environment with a few well-known people. On return to school, he found the normal 'buzz' of school life too difficult to cope with. This pupil was supported at half term and Easter in the RAISE facility during the day.
- When they returned to school, pupils were having 120 behavioural incidents per week. Teaching staff designed a simple, quiet environment, with a sofa and blankets and cuddly toys. Initially there were low expectations to aid the settling process. Over time the expectations have been raised, other pupils have joined for sessions and learning is now more fully accessed. The sofa is still used as a safe, calm place when needed.
- Another pupil used an area that she calls the 'secret room.' She still uses this room when needed but accesses learning and socialising with other pupils.

4.2 Quality of Provision and Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - Even better if...

...specific packages were developed to better enable pupils with more complex medical needs to return to school after long periods of absence.

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

The school values the virtual Challenge Partner offer and would like it to continue.

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 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.