



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR DRUMBEAT SCHOOL AND ASD SERVICE

Name of School:	Drumbeat School and ASD Services
Headteacher/Principal:	Marie Neave
Hub:	London Special School and AP Hub
School phase:	4-19 Years
MAT (if applicable):	Not Applicable - maintained community school

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	07/11/2022
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	Not used for the last remote visit. Previously leading.
Date of last QA Review	21/06/2021
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	19/03/2019



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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

Quality of provision and outcomes Leading

AND

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

Area of excellence Accredited

**Previously accredited valid areas
of excellence** Behaviour Systems to support
Autistic Pupils - 22/03/2017

Overall peer evaluation estimate Leading

***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

Drumbeat School and ASD Service (referred to as 'Drumbeat School') provides specialist provision for pupils aged 4-19. The school is for pupils with a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). All pupils have an education, health and care plan.

The school is split across two sites, one in Brockley and one in Downham. The Downham site is a built-for-purpose school that is ten years old. The Brockley site is a repurposed former primary school. An additional provision for 68 pupils is opening on the site of another Brockley primary school in January 2023. Lewisham Local Authority has plans for the school to expand significantly as part of their long term special educational needs and/or disability provision.

The school currently has 234 pupils on roll. The age range of pupils means that the school has an early years foundation stage and a Sixth Form.

The school has more than 170 staff, including a large cohort of teaching assistants (TAs). There is an expanded therapy offer, including speech and language therapy (SALT), occupational therapy (OT) and clinical psychology (CP).

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The headteacher was appointed at the school seven years ago. The school is continuing on an evolving journey of school improvement. This has included: revising the curricula taught at the school into a pathway model; restructuring staffing to ensure that the right support is available in each class; revising and evolving the extended leadership team as the school increases in size and with the addition of other provisions; and adopting a methodology 'Growing the Top' to embed a trust based observation (TOB) model that supports teachers to be the lead specialist professionals in their work.
- Drumbeat School is a school where leaders work hard to recognise and develop talent within their team. Eight of the TAs have recently qualified as teachers with five taking up posts at the school. More are being developed this academic year.
- Leaders have very specific issues they are working with that don't always match national trends. For example, pupils coming onto the school roll are generally more able, but with 'spikier' profiles. Some pupils are fantastic at decoding words and sound like fluent readers, but the context of the text is not necessarily understood.
- Leaders have developed links with a range of provisions share the specialist skills

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the school has developed on a local, national and international level. The school links with University College London (UCL) on research developing early ASD assessments. For example, in a widely reported research, movement development in children aged three years and under is now recognised as a key indicator of a potential later ASD diagnosis.

- The headteacher is part of the Masters programme at UCL in Autism. The school is sharing best ASD practice and working with schools in Northern Ireland and Sweden.
- Leaders at Drumbeat School have a vision that all members of staff are invested in and have the opportunity for significant development. With this training and development, staff are more able to have an impact on pupils' progress.
- Leaders are almost a year into using the 'Growing the Top' methodology for TOBs. Teachers are encouraged to develop their own pedagogy through reflective practice and continuing professional development (CPD). This responsibility for their own training and development is collaboratively planned through collegiate agreement with senior leaders.
- As the school grows, succession planning is becoming key. Leadership is structured so that middle leaders will have the opportunity to become the senior leaders of the future. This group includes pathway leads, upper pay scale teachers, teaching and learning leads, and subject leaders.

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

...leaders sharpened the articulation of the school's specific context from the website into the SEF and then into professional discussions.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well...

- Each pupil is on a distinct learning pathway. For example, secondary pupils in any of the three curriculum pathways will, for the most part, be prepared for success transitioning on into Level 1, 2 or 3 college places post-19.
- Each pupil has a breakdown of targets that link to their specific learning needs that can include: independence, social relationships, sensory and physical, social emotional and mental health, communication, mathematics and English. Class timetables indicate where the opportunities are to work on these targets for each individual pupil.
- Pupils at Drumbeat School use a wide range of systems and supports to aid their communication. This can include teachers using limited speech, communicating with pupils using Makaton, using single-word single-symbols Widgeits, alternative and augmentative communication aids, and picture exchange communication

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systems.

- Teaching staff are linked into professional communities across the school. The lead for each professional community is a senior leader or a therapist that facilitates professional discussions. Teachers have a Drumbeat specific 'toolbox' of research articles and evidence to help drive forward the continuous learning of the teaching staff.
- Current professional communities include questioning and higher order thinking, classroom and student behaviour support, working memory and descriptive progress feedback. Within these communities some practice is flagged as needed CPD for all teaching staff. For example, the idea of using more complex questioning for all pupils across the full range of the curricula pathways has now been embedded as a clear aspiration.
- Across the cohort, pupils are engaged in their learning through high quality pedagogy that matches each pupil's autism needs. For example, in classrooms, some pupils use TEACCH methodology, including work stations, timers, schedules and 'finished boxes' to cue pupils into their learning, while others have more discursive grouped activities.
- The therapy team ensures that pupils have their needs met to enable them to regulate their responses within the school environment. For most pupils this includes the use of built in trampolines or trampets, timetabled 'brain brakes', and racing around the playground track on trikes during break times.
- Where more complex support is needed, Drumbeat has the resources available to do this. For example, for one primary pupil, the class teacher referred the pupil to the school's OT for help managing their dysregulation. The pupil then had a programme of work with the OT to develop interventions and the pupil's skills to manage this. Once the pupil could regulate herself in school, she could transfer that regulation into her home setting.
- Assessment for and of learning is gathered against the school's chosen targets of Drumbeat levels, ASDAN targets, and Award in Education and Training targets. At the Downham site this is now being done using Earwig. Early in the new year, this will be shared as the school's consistent practice on the school's other sites.
- For the last three years all students have gone into employment, education and/or training. The lead for the sixth form tracks students' success at the next stage of their education or employment. This information links back into the quality assurance of the school's careers information, advice and guidance.
- Every year there is a careers week that all pupils at the school take part in. Younger pupils run a cafe and pizzeria. Older pupils in Key Stage 4 and 5 have opportunities for internal and external work placements at the local libraries and the Co-Op Store.

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

...none identified

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

- The deep and trusting relationships that the teaching and therapy team have developed fully supports pupils to make the most of their time at school. Pupil attendance is above national for special schools and the persistent absence rate is lower. Due to the methodology that colleagues use, pupils have their background stress reduced to a minimum. This in turn means pupils then have the chance to flourish in their learning.
- Drumbeat School is exemplary in that it provides clinical psychologists to observe and work with pupils with their ASD needs. This level of specialism supports and prepares pupils to manage transitions and make the best progress they can.
- The school's literacy lead is a middle leader and a qualified SALT. This colleague knows the best ways to open up communication for the cohort and allow the pupils to share their likes, needs, dislikes, and when they do and don't feel safe.
- The school has higher than national figures for pupils who are disadvantaged by being in receipt of free school meals and for those pupils who have English as a second language. The evidence from SLT shows that there is no disparity between outcomes data for any groups of pupils within the school cohort.
- All classrooms have a similar environment across the curricula pathways. Specialised members of the SLT have led training on how classrooms can support learning for pupils with ASD. Widgit vertical timetables are in place and as lessons change the last lesson is posted into a 'finished' box; zones of regulation displays are used for pupils to share how they feel; where needed, phonic charts help guide the pupils with letter and phonic recognition; 'All About Me' displays share each pupils likes, dislikes and bespoke learning targets are clearly displayed for staff and students to refer to.
- Pupils at the school can become vulnerable to being isolated in wider society. To this end the school plans for and introduces different members of the community for the pupils to get to know. In recent years this has included a police officer, a nurse, a lollipop person, a road sweeper, an author with autism, a prison officer, and a member of the people's parliament who has autism. For some of these visitors coming into the Drumbeat community has had a profound impact, with them going on to volunteer at the school.
- To motivate the pupils even further, the Sixth Form students have had a visit from one of their peers who has gone on into paid employment, explaining how the skills he had developed at school prepared him for a life at work.

5. Area of Excellence

Community Engagement (Local and International)

Accredited

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

The SLT have a 'golden thread' at Drumbeat School that is to be 'ambassadors for best practice in working with people with autism'. This has led to the school reaching out to the wider community that pupils and families need the support of, but where understanding of the challenges of ASD may not yet be in place.

For Drumbeat School this meant instigating and developing a link with the MET police about safety in the community for people with autism. This has developed into an ongoing training package by Drumbeat School for MET colleagues regarding this important aspect of their community working. Pupils have developed a presentation to share their experiences of the challenges they have in everyday experiences.

Drumbeat School also provides outreach to local schools including workshops and parent/carer surgeries.

Internationally, the school has linked up and is working with autism specialist provisions in Sweden and Northern Ireland to take the lead on best practice models.

Leaders at the school also provide content for the UCL MA course in autism and have links into a Queen's University, Canada project on resilient leadership.

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

Feedback from wider service colleagues, local schools, international school links, academic research links and from the ongoing outreach service has been exemplary. This is evident in the continuing links being built and those sustained in 'frontline' delivery.

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



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

To build on the professional group developed at this review, looking at the best uses of assessment for Challenge Partner special schools, linking Earwig assessments to bespoke individual learning targets.

To use the knowledge of other Challenge Partner special schools' areas of excellence to further promote pupils' success into apprenticeship outcomes.

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.