



VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP QUALITY
ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR
THE GRANGE

Name of School:	The Grange
Headteacher/Principal:	Ian Critchley
Hub:	North West
School phase:	Academy (All Through)
MAT (if applicable):	Wade Deacon Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this virtual Leadership Quality Assurance Review:	Effective
Date of this Review:	05/07/2021
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Working towards effective
Date of last QA Review	17/01/2020
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Requires Improvement
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	08/07/2016



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REVIEW REPORT FOR THE GRANGE

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	Effective
School improvement strategies	Effective
Approach to recovery and remote learning	Not applicable
Area of excellence	Not applicable
Overall peer evaluation estimate	Effective

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.

The peer evaluation estimate included on this report has been collectively agreed between the lead reviewer, review team and host school. The estimate is based on the evidence seen as part of the virtual Leadership Quality Assurance Review.

Whilst every effort has been made to triangulate the evidence presented during the review, it is important to note that the nature of working remotely means that the estimate given only encompasses that which is able to be explored virtually.

1. Context and character of the school

This is an all-through school that caters for students from the ages of 3 to 16 years, serving the community of Runcorn. It became an academy member of the Wade Deacon Trust in January 2018. The school is situated in the borough of Halton which is the 19th most deprived local authority out of 152 local authorities.

The eligibility of pupils for free school meals is well above that seen nationally. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is also above average, as is the proportion who are in receipt of an education, health and care plan (EHCP).

The school has a 52 full-time-equivalent place nursery and three resource bases for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has a significant number of pupils who are young carers and there are 17 pupils in the school who are classified as Children in Care.

The school holds the following awards: IAG Gold Award (2016); Healthy Schools (2016); School Games Programme (2020); and Virtual School Games Programme (2020).

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The headteacher, governors and senior leadership team have set an ambitious vision for the school. They are successfully arresting historical underachievement. Outcomes for pupils are improving due to: the design of an ambitious curriculum, which is designed to meet the needs of all pupils; improved teaching and learning; rigorous systems for assessment; improved leadership at all levels; and the introduction a culture of high expectations and accountability.
- The new leadership team has created a culture to which people want to belong. Staff are united as a team because in this school everyone is valued for the contribution that they make to the ethos of 'high standards for all'. Senior leaders walk alongside middle leaders every step of the way showing them how to monitor and evaluate all aspects of provision. This has led to recently improved outcomes for pupils, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Regular continuous professional development (CPD) and partnership with the Wade Deacon Trust are having a positive impact on developing both curriculum planning and teaching. Subject leaders work well together across all phases and benefit from one another's expertise. For example, the strong relationship with the Maths Hub has led to improved outcomes at the end of Key stage 1 and allowed pupils to think more deeply as to how they have arrived at an answer. Strategies now used such as 'cold calling' and 'say it again by making this better', are

helping pupils clarify their thinking.

- Teachers feel valued and senior leaders spot staff's strengths and push them to 'stretch their wings and fly', by giving them responsibilities. As a result, many teachers are now developing their research skills and using this information to inform their practice. Teaching assistants receive high quality training and are able to identify the learning journey of students in their care.
- Well-being of staff is strong, as proven by the outstanding attendance of staff and the highly positive responses in staff surveys.
- The headteacher has introduced strong systems at every level to ensure that staff are clear as to how they will provide at least a good quality of education. The school is now becoming the first school of choice in the community with numbers rising year on year. Everybody in the school contributes to a strong work ethic. The support offered by the administration team to teachers in sharing the load relating to Covid and Covid Recovery has been noteworthy.
- Leaders have ensured that the backlog of underachievement is acted upon and that gaps in students' learning in the secondary school are being addressed. Recently secondary teachers have been trained in how to teach reading so that below-average-attaining students can access the curriculum.
- Strong relationships are at the core of the school's work. Pupils interviewed said that what they missed most about school during Covid were their teachers, 'because they are kind and helpful and are always there for us'.

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

...the success criteria in the school development plan were more robust in terms of identifying discernible anticipated outcomes.

...there were more opportunities for disciplinary reading in all subjects, with planned opportunities for developing oracy.

...leaders continued working on improving attendance for those students who are persistently absent from school.

3.1 School improvement strategies and the extent to which these address the needs of different groups of learners, especially disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs - What went well

- Leaders at all levels have worked relentlessly to address issues from the last Challenge Partners' review. This is most noticeable in the improved rates of progress in writing and in mathematics. Leaders at all levels know the school very

well and self-evaluation is accurate. All areas for improvement are rightly recognised and clear steps for action are both identified and closely monitored.

- 'The Happy At School Project' has had a significant impact on the change of culture in the school. The school is now a calm and purposeful community where students feel valued and are rapidly acquiring the skills of resilience and self-regulation. This is having a positive impact on behaviour across the school and parents say that behaviour in the school has much improved since the new leadership team took over.
- Transition arrangements in this all-through school are very impressive, and pupils are well inducted into all phases of the school because of the strong and effective communication systems between staff. Home visits are also undertaken, and this is sending clear messages to the community as to the importance of parents being partners in learning.
- All groups of students, including those with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and young carers, are very well known to staff and receive high quality pastoral and academic support in this highly inclusive school where students' needs come first. This starts in the Early Years Foundation Stage where every child's uniqueness is valued and strong provision for the acquisition of basic skills sets a firm foundation for future learning.
- A contributory factor to school improvement is the rigorous monitoring undertaken by leaders at all levels, any underperformance is very quickly addressed through coaching, mentoring, testing of students' understanding and rigorous appraisals of staff.
- Parents of students with SEND say that they are very well supported by the school. They are delighted with the progress that their children make and the help that is offered. This was especially evident during Covid when they were contacted regularly by the school to see if they needed any extra help. They are particularly pleased with transitions as individual learning plans are consistently reviewed and new targets for progress are set.
- Leaders have made bold and courageous decisions, post pandemic, to narrow options to enable students to be more successful in EBacc subjects so that gaps can be addressed and students can focus on learning fewer subjects in greater depth.

3.2 School improvement strategies and the extent to which these address the needs of different groups of learners, especially disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs - Even better if

- ...there were clear strategies in place in all subjects as to how to improve progress for high-prior-attaining students.
- ...the school continued to diminish the differences for disadvantaged students with all students nationally.

4.1 Approach to recovery and remote learning - What went well

- The school leadership demonstrated strong management and agility in moving to remote learning during lockdown one, whilst supporting the welfare needs of students and the wider community. Throughout lockdowns one and two, high quality provision for keyworker and vulnerable children was established with strong levels of engagement and high levels of communication between the school and parents.
- In the Autumn term of 2020, leaders reflected deeply on the lockdown one experience and planned for improvement of all aspects of remote learning provision. For example, staff training on SeeSaw and Microsoft Teams, work with parents and students and adapting curriculum plans to plug gaps in learning ensured that there was continuity in learning.
- Effective use of assessment contributed to the school's success in remote learning, which identified areas of strong learning and progress, and elements of lost learning that needed to be addressed.
- Staff developed a range of creative and adaptive approaches to remote learning and provision throughout lockdowns to support students and engage the community. This included 'No Screen Thursday', 'work with the NHS', Holiday Activity Fund and Daily Challenges.
- Lessons learnt from remote learning, such as the use of various applications, have been incorporated into lessons; for example, the use of See Saw to evidence live learning. This is greatly appreciated by parents and students alike.
- The well-being of students has been promoted well and the lockdown video made by the school showed the clear spirit of this learning community where students, staff, parents and ex-students all came together to show a united front during the pandemic.

4.2 Approach to recovery and remote learning - Even better if...

- ...more digital opportunities were provided for parents to help their children develop self-esteem.
- ...the new digital library (Myon) was fully aligned with subjects taught so that students can follow up their learning.

5. Area of Excellence

Not applicable

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

The school is reflecting on future priorities.

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 also 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.