



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR HILLSIDE HIGH SCHOOL

Name of School:	Hillside High School
Headteacher/Principal:	Amanda Ryan
Hub:	Aspire
School phase:	Secondary
MAT (if applicable):	Wade Deacon Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Effective
Date of this Review:	04/05/2022
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Effective
Date of last QA Review	03/03/2021
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Requires Improvement
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	29/06/2021



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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	Effective
Quality of provision and outcomes	Effective

AND

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

Area of excellence	Not applicable
Previously accredited valid areas of excellence	Not applicable
Overall peer evaluation estimate	Effective

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

Hillside High School, a smaller than average 11-16 high school, is situated in Bootle, an area of high social deprivation in the borough of Sefton. Over half of the student population is disadvantaged, which is more than double the national average. Most students are of White British heritage although the proportion of students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is increasing rapidly. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is above the national average, while those with an education, health and care plan is below. Mobility is high and a significant proportion of students leave or join the school at other than the usual times.

Hillside joined the Wade Deacon Academy Trust in March 2015. The school continues to benefit from the support of the trust in assisting leaders to raise standards. This has been especially valuable during the pandemic.

The school's vision is encompassed in the motto, 'Striving for excellence in the heart of the community'. All staff emphasise the opportunities they provide for the students to make them feel valued members of the school and that they have a bright future beyond Hillside.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The principal and her team have developed a culture in which the highest expectations of students and staff are the norm. Senior leaders are highly skilled at ensuring that all staff feel a valued part of the team. Everyone shares the vision and values of the school. This underpins the highly focused and comprehensive systems and processes established by them. Leaders have high expectations of the teachers who work at Hillside, resulting in almost all students benefiting from teachers' up to date subject knowledge and pedagogy.
- Leaders track learning, attendance and welfare of all students regularly and in detail. A range of support is provided to ensure that students attend school regularly and catch up in their learning if they fall behind. Leaders recognise more needs to be done to improve the attendance of some students.
- Subject leaders know their subjects and areas of responsibility well and ensure there is sufficient breadth to the curriculum. The identification of core knowledge within departments has paid dividends. It is evident, when visiting lessons, that teachers are clear about what students should know and remember. In the best lessons, students are given ample opportunities to demonstrate this, particularly through the effective use of speaking frames and collaborative learning.
- Professional development activities are meaningful. For example, reading has been identified as a fundamental pillar of the curriculum provision at Hillside. As a

result of deploying effective reading strategies, more students are now confident readers and can decode unfamiliar words on their own. Expert teachers frequently share new vocabulary with teaching assistants ahead of their lessons to secure students' comprehension during lessons.

- All leaders check on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to identify what works best and where practice can improve further. The Hillside Core 5 approach was embedded in all lessons visited. Staff, including teachers new to the profession, value the high-quality training and development provided.
- At Key Stage 3, students follow the National Curriculum. At Key stage 4, they can follow an academic pathway leading to the EBacc (English Baccalaureate) or vocational qualifications based on students' interests and aspirations. An increasing number of students now experience the breadth and depth that these qualifications provide.
- The curriculum also includes a range of opportunities for students to develop their personal and social skills. A Year 11 assembly around the concept of kindness allowed students to reflect on the importance of being kind to yourself, others and the planet. It started with a positive affirmation about the year group "you are a phenomenally kind Year 11!" This set the right context. Visuals supported vocabulary building and reading skills.
- Leaders have implemented a new appraisal system which has led to positive feedback and engagement from staff, particularly around engaging with disciplined inquiry and exploration, trialling interventions and monitoring impact. Leaders receive extensive support from the Trust, such as moderation exercises and professional development activities.

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

... leaders ensured the work around oracy (Voice 21) was fully implemented in all subjects by:

- developing and securing an oracy rich approach to teaching around school
- enhancing teachers' knowledge around best practice around oracy
- setting clear expectations around oracy activities within lessons or a sequence of learning.

... in all subjects, leaders ensured the identification of gaps in knowledge or misconceptions systematically led to curriculum modification and students knowing more, remembering more and doing more.

... leaders reviewed their attendance policy and practice to improve the attendance and punctuality of some students.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Behaviours for learning are positive across school. Students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and, in the best lessons, are resilient and not afraid to make mistakes. In all lessons visited, students benefit from positive relationships with their teachers. They speak confidently to visitors and are not afraid to share their views.
- In the best lessons, learning is well paced and strong questioning by teachers extends students' critical thinking and deepens their learning. For example, in a Spanish lesson, students were asked to magpie from their peers to expand their answers. Consequently, they consolidated their oracy skills in the foreign language and produced more elaborate answers.
- Retrieval activities are implemented consistently across subjects and in the best lessons, they allow students to think hard and retrieve knowledge across a greater timescale. This was evident in a geography lesson where students were asked to work on a key question around the topic of erosion and recall prior knowledge. Students could clearly apply the key vocabulary acquired from previous lessons.
- In a few lessons, sufficient thinking time allowed students of different abilities to engage in learning conversations and improve their work. It also enabled the less able to consolidate their vocabulary and share their findings with confidence in front of the class. Year 10 students worked purposefully in groups whilst analysing the text *An Inspector Calls*. They demonstrated stamina and, as a result, used their time well to identify the degree to which characters showed moral, social and personal responsibility within the text. They could discuss the extent to which each member of the Birling family recognised their obligations.
- The identification and recall of core knowledge were apparent in all lessons visited. Effective modelling from teachers secured comprehension. In a Year 7 drama lesson, students were encouraged to spotlight freeze frames about Romeo and Juliet to their peers as demonstrated by their teacher early in the lesson. This enabled them to recall crucial parts of the plot within the play. The teacher had high expectations around vocabulary. A student used the word "executed" and was asked to remember the word "banished" introduced early on in the sequence of learning.
- In the best subjects, the schemes of learning are adapted by teachers to best meet the needs of all students and ensure they all reach their full potential. In these lessons, schemes of learning are not used rigidly and the Hillside Core 5 key teaching principles are used purposefully. For example, in mathematics, students in Year 7 are revisiting key components of knowledge not acquired at Key Stage 2. Imaginative and creative activities (using art to describe a favourite number) allowed the group to improve their work on number bonds using manipulatives.

- Feedback has a tangible impact on students' progression. Students could explain how the *accelerate* approach allowed them to improve their work over time by reviewing their gaps in knowledge and addressing misconceptions.

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

... all teachers used the Hillside Core 5 key teaching principles purposefully, particularly assessment for learning, to allow all students to know more, remember more and do more within their lessons.

... there were more opportunities for students to collaborate and contribute verbally in lessons and extend their responses.

... teachers continued to expand students' vocabulary, ensuring opportunities to collaborate and apply what they know and can remember are frequent during a sequence of learning.

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

- Leaders have created an inclusive learning environment for all students, including those who are with SEND and disadvantaged. They address weaknesses with determination to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable. As a result of their approach, students in lessons are ready to learn within a supportive and productive setting
- The behaviour for learning of both students with SEND and those who are disadvantaged is usually positive. They are resilient when given the opportunity to face a problem and, in their books, take care with their work. In the best lessons, they do not hesitate to ask questions to deepen their learning and when meeting with visitors, share their views about school with confidence.
- In the best lessons, teachers use the Hillside Core 5 teaching principles purposefully. This was apparent in a design technology lesson where a disadvantaged student was able to verbally articulate how to draw a 3D cube using isometric principles whilst one of his peers related its use in architecture.
- The inclusive culture across the school ensures that all students have opportunities to access the curriculum offer, such as the choice of a modern foreign language in both the academic and vocational pathways at Key Stage 4.
- Students with SEND are well supported through a range of additional programmes. They make particularly sustained progress in the bespoke programmes they take, such as through the work with a team of dynamic and knowledgeable tutors / mentors.

- Trusting relationships between teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) help vulnerable students to successfully access the curriculum. This was apparent in a geography lesson on erosion where a TA successfully scaffolded a task, resulting in a student who had recently returned from the school Alternative Provision to rapidly access the curriculum and catch up with his peers.
- Leaders use the effective testing tools to identify students with significant gaps in reading (very low scores) and thus support them. The Project X reading programme allows students to revisit all reading domains and consequently improve their reading over time.
- In the best subjects, teachers use the information about their students to adapt the curriculum and refine pedagogical approaches which will have the biggest impact on their learning.
- All students, including the most vulnerable, benefit from a range of enrichment activities which allow them to expand their cultural capital. Leaders are ensuring that every young person in school has the choice of a high-quality route in education, employment or training.

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

... leaders improved the attendance of the most vulnerable, particularly those who are persistently absent and from hard to reach families.

... leaders continued to close the attainment and progress gaps between disadvantaged students and their peers.

... leaders actively expected and motivated the most vulnerable to read regularly at home.

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

Leaders will access support through their hub.



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Following the QA Review

The review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. However, the main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities and CP will collate and analyse report content to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector each year.

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.