

<b>Name of School:</b>	Alderwasley Hall School
<b>Head teacher/Principal:</b>	Sara Forsyth
<b>Hub:</b>	Ash Field
<b>School type:</b>	Independent Special
<b>MAT (if applicable):</b>	Not applicable

<b>Estimate at this QA Review:</b>	Outstanding
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	14/03/2018
<b>Estimate at last QA Review</b>	Good
<b>Date of last QA Review</b>	08/03/2017
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	Good
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	01/07/2014

**Quality Assurance Review**

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

<b>School Improvement Strategies</b>	Outstanding
<b>Outcomes for Pupils</b>	Outstanding
<b>Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment</b>	Outstanding
<b>Area of Excellence</b>	Accredited
<b>Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence</b>	Not applicable
<b>Overall Estimate</b>	Outstanding

*Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.*

## **1. Information about the school**

- Alderwasley Hall School is a part of the SENAD group of schools and is also a registered children's home.
- The school is located on two sites. The Alderwasley Hall site accommodates pupils up to 16 years of age. The Alderwasley Sixth Form Centre provides the education and residence for pupils who are post-16. There is further residential accommodation for pupils who are preparing for independent living.
- The school currently provides education for boys and girls aged six to 19 years, although it is registered for pupils from five years of age. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. About two-thirds of the pupils are boys.
- The school caters for pupils who have complex speech, language and communication needs. All pupils also have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder, Asperger syndrome and/or high functioning autism. Almost all have additional or secondary diagnoses which may include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiance disorder and/or pathological demand avoidance.
- There are currently 102 pupils on roll. Thirty-eight pupils currently live at the school while the remainder attend as day pupils. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan.
- The headteacher, who is a long-term employee of the school, took up her post in September 2016 following the retirement of the previous headteacher. The deputy headteacher also took up appointment at the start of the 2016/17 academic year.

### **2.1 School Improvement Strategies - Follow up from previous review**

- School leaders have reorganised the line management structure for teaching assistants (TAs). They are now, along with teachers, the responsibility of the deputy headteacher. They are provided with their own continuing professional development (CPD) which is more aligned than previously to the TA standards.
- Leaders have continued to develop the systems they are using to track and monitor pupils' academic progress. They have decided on reasonable thresholds against which to compare the big picture in core subjects in each key stage. Leaders are clear that this remains a work in progress.

### **2.2 School Improvement Strategies - What went well**

- Leaders have maintained a sustainable pace of change, utilising a systematic approach to identifying areas for development and relentlessly making improvements. The organisation of training and meetings allows very effective cascading of key messages to staff at all levels.
- The impact of restructuring the line management and development of TAs has had a positive impact on the quality of their work in the classroom. Supervision

(performance management) incorporates the school's version of TA standards which have been agreed with the TA team, enabling them to be held to account more rigorously.

- The school has developed an annual calendar of monitoring activities, focusing on learning observations and work scrutiny. The evaluation of teaching and learning is closely linked with the teachers' standards; as part of this, the school has developed the 'Alderwasley standard' to ensure that all staff are clear about leaders' expectations. The monitoring system associated with the collection of this information is providing leaders with information about strong practice and areas in need for development, both in terms of individual teachers and across the school.
- School leaders use information from a wide range of sources as part of their planning for development. In addition to their own internal monitoring, the school uses reports from the proprietor's monitoring visits, inspections by commissioning local authorities as well as Challenge Partners QA reviews to identify needs.
- The school has raised the threshold at which they put in place interventions to address issues that arise with pupils' attendance. Actions are now taken when pupils' absence falls around the nationally accepted threshold of persistent absence where previously it was lower. Earlier instigation of action plans is supporting those pupils to improve their attendance, including examples where the improvement is the equivalent of one more day per week than seen previously.
- Curriculum development is now focusing on finding progression routes that match pupils' aspirations more closely. Greater provision is being made for using external providers while recognising that challenges remain to help pupils have access to full BTEC courses.
- Further work to support the development of pupils' emotional resilience has increased the range of approaches available to teachers and given them the opportunity to find out which ones suit their style of teaching. The internal therapy team provides advice, with the expectation that staff trial this in their classrooms.
- The development of potential leaders is considered to be a strength within both education and care strands. The school has provided training and opportunities for identified staff to move into roles that have greater responsibility. This has included, for example, developing the school's assessment without levels system.

### **2.3 School Improvement Strategies - Even better if...**

...leaders explored different ways of reporting the impact of therapies and care on outcomes for different groups of pupils within the school.

### **3.1 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Follow up from previous review**

- There is a mixed picture of effective deployment and impact of teaching assistants

across the school. In the strongest practice, experienced TAs use their initiative to make sensible decisions about how to best provide effective support. Where practice is weaker, teachers do not direct supply teaching assistants to be more productive when fewer than expected pupils are present in the class.

- Teachers are better at exploiting opportunities to develop pupils' responses, while keeping them engaged and refocusing them on task effectively. They often find the right balance between providing some time for pupils to talk about their personal needs and circumstances before refocusing them on their work.

### 3.2 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - What went well

- Teachers' planning takes full account of pupils' individual needs and abilities. Plans are written so that there is a focus on purposeful learning, not on completing a series of tasks. In the best lessons the purpose of learning is explained to the pupils in an understandable way.
- Teachers' knowledge of the pupils also allows them to choose the right pace of learning. In lessons where there are more than one or two pupils, there are often multiple different mini-lessons going on in the same place. The personalisation of expectations and support provided by staff enables pupils to work at the level which is appropriate to them. This leads to high levels of engagement in a wide variety of activities.
- Relationships are strong and support the learning process well. This encourages teachers to have high expectations and provide appropriate levels of challenge in order to develop pupils' resilience. Pupils are exposed to, and learn to use, complex language and vocabulary in context as well as demonstrate their understanding of the meaning of the words and phrases they have learned. They work respectfully with each other, allowing each other to ask and answer questions.
- Teachers select and use their resources well to establish the context for learning and stimulate engagement. Use of video resources are well chosen to engage, used as stimulus material to develop understanding through questioning. In some lessons, the use of information and communication technology to give pupils additional support and conduct their own research is promoting greater independence and helping pupils to improve their literacy skills.
- The school's integration of therapy and education is routine. Where pupils return from therapy in the middle of a lesson, they are quickly included to ensure they miss the least amount of learning possible. Teachers are provided with additional curriculum time in English and mathematics to support pupils to catch up with any missed learning.
- Therapeutic resources are skilfully deployed to help pupils access learning. The school is seeing a reduction over time in the need for the use of supporting resources as pupils move through the school.
- The use of 'personal reflection improving and developing my education' (PRIDE) time is very effective in helping pupils to understand how to improve their learning for next time. The practice of pupils using green pens to respond to marking is well embedded across the school.
- Teachers' questioning is typically broad and open, helping them to gauge pupils'

understanding. Almost all teachers use questioning skilfully to enhance learning. Questions are often targeted, matching the level of the question to the individual, demonstrating an awareness of their strengths, preferences and needs.

### **3.3 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Even better if...**

...school leaders reviewed the protocols and expectations around how teachers deploy teaching assistants to ensure that supply staff are always well used.

## **4. Outcomes for Pupils**

- Pupils join the school with levels of academic achievement that are one to two years behind their mainstream peers. High proportions have been out of full time education for at least six months prior to admission, or where previous provision had failed to meet their needs adequately.
- The school's new tracking system monitors pupils' progress against a flightpath based, for the large majority, on predictions from CAT4 assessment results. In the primary school, this information shows that lower proportions are on track in English and mathematics than in science, where the proportion approaches that expected by the school. Leaders are of the opinion these assessments do not yet fully represent the progress being made by the school's youngest pupils. They have identified three contributory factors for this: teachers' confidence in assessing against the new flightpaths; the need to work with less robust baseline information; and the greater need to focus initially on therapeutic interventions with this group of pupils.
- Information shows that the proportion of pupils in Key Stage 3 who are on track in all three subjects broadly matches the school's high expectations. These proportions are a little lower in Key Stage 4. In both Key Stages 3 and 4, a greater proportion of pupils are on track in English and mathematics than in science.
- The school compares the performance of residential and day pupils, boys and girls, and other groups such as looked after children or disadvantaged pupils against their peers. The school's analysis of the performance of different groups indicates few discernible differences.
- The school's analysis of progress information from the previous academic year shows that pupils made most progress through Key Stage 4. There was little difference between English and mathematics across the school, but science showed less progress. Progress in Key Stage 3 was less than in Key Stage 4 in core subjects.
- GCSE results in the last academic year were the best in the school's history. Over two-thirds of the 42 entries in ten subjects achieved grade 4/C or above. A greater proportion of pupils achieved this level in mathematics than in English.
- While there were a low number of entries, all pupils who entered A-level examinations passed their qualifications.
- Pupils achieved a high number of BTEC unit accreditations, although the number of full BTEC qualifications awarded was low.

- The high number of entry level qualification passes has been sustained over many years. However, passes in functional skills show a declining trend over recent years.

## **5. Area of Excellence**

Developing therapeutic and sensory strategies to enhance the attendance and behaviour for learning of pupils with autism and/or anxiety.

### **5.1 Why has this area been identified as a strength?**

The therapy provision available at the school is well regarded and often a key reason for pupils' placement at the school. The school's specialist teams not only provide individual programmes for pupils, but also have responsibility to ensure that staff throughout the school are well prepared to support pupils and help them to overcome their barriers to learning. To achieve this, the school provides training and support for all staff to ensure that they have the skills to set up and maintain a learning environment that is conducive to engaging pupils, and thereby encouraging their attendance and positive behaviour for learning.

On a leadership development day, as well as some time to reflect, discuss and devise an action plan which the school will help the visitor to implement, the school could offer delegates information about:

- systems to baseline and measure improvement using smart goals
- understanding what attention looks like for this group of pupils
- how to set up the learning environment, and select and use supportive resources
- anxiety management strategies
- strategies for developing pupils' emotional resilience
- using the 'Zones of Regulation' approach to develop pupils' emotional management
- implementing sensory strategies in their classrooms

### **5.2 What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?**

The school employs a range of skilled and experienced professionals, such as speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists and psychotherapists, who devise and provide training for teachers and teaching assistants. These staff attend external training in order to maintain and extend their knowledge and skills.

### **5.3 What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?**

The provision of therapeutic and sensory strategies has a substantial and demonstrable impact on pupils' attendance. The very large majority of pupils enrol having not attended

school in the six-month period prior to entry. Over the course of their first year, pupils in all key stages typically make significant gains and then sustain this for the duration of their placement. The school's information indicates that the initial improvement is on average 78%, with many making gains of over 90%.

The other substantial and demonstrable improvement observed by the school is in the reduction of the incidence and severity of challenging behaviour where this is a known aspect of pupils' needs profile. The school's records show that the number of incidents almost always declines significantly in the second six months of a pupils' placement. On average, the number of incidents decreases by 44% for this group of pupils.

The school also cites improvements in engagement and self-regulation, as well as consequently in academic outcomes, although they have not yet collated information that allows them to demonstrate a causal link.

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

Emma Illingworth

Head of therapies

emma.illingworth@senadgroup.com

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

Discussions with Keyham Lodge School about their area of excellence around curriculum pathways.

Participation in further leadership development days, particularly in the local area rather than London.

**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.**