
CHALLENGE PARTNERS: Quality Assurance Review Written Report

Name of School:	Wyedean School and Sixth Form Centre
School Address:	Beachley Road, Sedbury, Chepstow, NP16 7AA
Hub School:	Royal Wootton Bassett

Telephone Number:	01291625340
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Unique Reference Number:	137382
Local Authority:	Gloucestershire
Type of School:	Secondary
School Category:	Academy converter
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Number on roll:	983
Head teacher/Principal:	Robert Ford

Date of last Ofsted inspection:	4-5 November 2014
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good

Date of Quality Assurance Review:	
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7-9 November 2016

QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW – SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES¹

School Improvement Strategies: Good

Outcomes for Pupils is: Good

Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment: Good

Confirmed and valid for 3 years

Area of Excellence:
English

Previously accredited Areas of Excellence: n/a

Overall Review Evaluation

The Quality Assurance Review found indicators that Wyedean School and Sixth Form Centre appears to be within the Good grade as judged by Ofsted in the school's previous Ofsted report.

1. 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.

Information about the school

- Wyedean School and Sixth Form Centre is an average-sized secondary school.
- Most pupils are of white British heritage and enter the school with broadly average prior attainment.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding (disadvantaged pupils) is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those who have a statement of special educational needs, is below average.
- Wyedean School and Sixth Form Centre is a Confucius Institute Hub for Monmouthshire and the Forest of Dean; a DFID Global Learning Expert Centre; Classics for All Monmouthshire/Forest of Dean expert centre and a British Council 'Ambassador School' for international education.

School Improvement Strategies

- Following a period of turbulence when the school was in special measures and staff felt very pressurised, the new Headteacher has worked tirelessly to develop a culture of openness, transparency and trust. In particular, leaders have been empowered and are enjoying the freedom to innovate. As a result, the school now has a clear vision and is a harmonious place where everyone feels valued. This is helping to drive school improvement because all stakeholders are pulling in the same direction.
- The school is situated on the England/Wales border in an area with a falling demographic. This unusual context means that the school could potentially become quite isolated. Senior leaders have quickly recognised the importance of re-engaging with the local community. As a result, there is a thriving evening adult education programme and an emphasis on looking outwards. The recently introduced global learning programme is helping in this strategy.
- The school has a very firm idea of its own strengths and weaknesses. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate and the school's self-evaluation document is clear, succinct and transparent.
- As a result of the falling roll, the school had a large deficit budget. As a consequence of clear and robust leadership from the Headteacher and the Finance and Business Director, the school has been successful in reducing the deficit to a manageable level. As the school becomes more successful, numbers are beginning to rise and the school is on track to present a balanced budget in the near future.
- Systems and procedures have undergone a major overhaul and there is increased rigour. Data tracking has become more uniform across subjects and data is used

more effectively to evaluate impact and to effect change. Systems for monitoring teaching, quality assurance and performance management are now robust.

- School improvement is central to the school's ethos. Senior and middle leaders are committed to developing their skills and there is a strong sense of collegiality. Leaders have a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and self evaluation is honest and accurate.
- Intervention strategies to boost pupil progress are well thought-out and the impact is clear in improved outcomes. Leaders identify barriers to learning and work tirelessly to find ways to overcome them. There is a whole school system of recording the current interventions and monitoring their impact. This is helping to drive improvement forward.
- From a curriculum point of view, the school has a number of interesting subjects on offer such as Mandarin, Latin and critical thinking. Numbers of pupils choosing to study modern foreign languages and triple science are increasing, thus helping more pupils to achieve the English Baccalaureate qualification. The innovative curriculum offer is helping to attract pupils to the school and to broaden their horizons.

Pupil Outcomes

- Pupils enter Wyedean School and Sixth Form Centre with attainment that is broadly average. They make good progress from their starting points and attain results that are in line with national benchmarks.
- The school was pleased with the 2016 GCSE results. Attainment figures showed an improvement in terms of 5A*-C including English and mathematics from 59% in 2015 to 65% in 2016. There was strong performance from the vast majority of subjects, including English and mathematics. The school's Attainment 8 score (unvalidated) was 5.05, which equates to an average grade C.
- The unvalidated Progress 8 score for 2016 gives a provisional figure of +0.02 which is very similar to the previous year. Progress in English was particularly strong with 91% making 3 levels of progress, a significant increase on the previous year's figure of 75%; the percentage of pupils making 4 levels of progress increased to 52% in 2016 from 39% in 2015. Progress in mathematics remained largely the same as the

previous year and lagged a little behind English. However, staffing difficulties in this department last year caused disruption in learning and results were very creditable in the circumstances.

- Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. The school spends its pupil premium funding on providing these pupils with extra resources and 1:1 or small group interventions. The impact of this has been analysed and is shown to be effective. For example, last year a group of approximately 20 disadvantaged pupils received extra help in mathematics, with a 90% success rate in improving their performance.
- Post-16 results for 2016 were strong for Advanced level with an ALPS grade 2 (top 10% nationally). BTEC results were in the top 25% nationally. However, Year 12 results scored an ALPS grade 5, demonstrating lower achievement. Nonetheless, there was an improvement in the pass rate for this cohort.
- School leaders focus relentlessly on improving outcomes and increasingly senior leaders hold middle leaders more stringently to account. Tracking data is produced regularly to analyse performance and barriers to progress are quickly identified, shared and acted upon.
- The school's own data shows that the progress of pupils currently in the school is in line with expectations. However, the new progress tracking system has yet to embed fully and there is quite a variation in the performance levels that staff are reporting, across subjects and year groups. The school is aware that this is 'work in progress' and plans are in place to ensure that the system becomes more accurate and robust.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- The development of teaching has a high priority within the school. Leaders have created a culture of openness and trust which is bearing fruit.
- There is a very positive climate for learning throughout the school. The building is bright and welcoming; eye-catching wall displays, including examples of pupils' work, help to stimulate interest and engagement. In classrooms, there is an inclusive atmosphere which enables quality learning to take place. Pupils feel safe to express their views and contribute their ideas.
- There are very strong relationships in the school and this is helping to drive forward school improvement. Staff know their pupils well and have a firm knowledge of the 'group' to which they belong. As a result, classroom teachers are able to target work to help their specific needs.
- Overall, there are high expectations of pupils in lessons. They demonstrate a willingness to learn and they want to do well. Consequently, pupils behave well and engagement is high. The school has come on a long journey and there is a sense of cohesion and moving forward together.

- Teachers encourage pupils to strive for excellence and pupils enjoy working collaboratively together and rising to this challenge. Pupils told reviewers that they particularly valued the opportunities for 'peer to peer' support.
- In the best lessons seen, learning moved at a swift pace. Pupils were given time to think and reflect on their work which helped them to embed new knowledge, skills and understanding quickly. Questioning was used very well to push and develop thinking skills and to encourage pupils to take risks with their learning.
- Reviewers saw many examples of very effective feedback which pupils had used to improve their work. For example, there were excellent examples of teachers giving in-depth analyses of pupils' work and evidence of pupils redrafting their writing as a result. Moreover, reviewers saw examples of teachers modelling examples of high quality work so that pupils knew what to aim for.
- Most lessons are well-planned and they give a great deal of thought to preparing interesting and stimulating activities and resources. For example, in an English lesson, the teacher took on the role of Macbeth and conducted much of the lesson in Shakespearean style. In another lesson, the teacher demonstrated an innovative use of digital resources. Such activities and resources help to motivate and engage pupils and thus accelerate their learning and progress.
- Teachers are supported in their development by a comprehensive professional development programme. In particular, teachers are enjoying being part of the lesson study programme. They work in triads to help develop each other's skills and, although early in its development, this approach is already having impact.
- Personal professional development goals are included in each teacher's performance management targets. To support this, the school has allocated each teacher one extra non-contact period per week which they use to develop their professional practice in any way they choose.
- Over the last year, the school has developed a new system to monitor and track progress. Teachers have worked hard to institute a system whereby progress is measured in each subject against a set of clearly identified criteria. At present, work is being done to transfer this information onto the 4Matrix system which will enable teachers to track pupils' progress against a flight path. Although not yet fully embedded, the school has confidence in the new system and its potential to raise expectations even higher.

Quality of Area of Excellence

English

Why has this area been identified as a strength?

There is a culture of high expectations within the department to which pupils respond with enthusiasm. All English teachers have a collaborative approach to school improvement, striving for excellence with enthusiasm and determination. Departmental priorities are communicated clearly and concisely. There are innovative practices which are implemented and embedded and which are having a demonstrable impact on pupil progress.

There is a sharp focus on improving the quality of teaching and a robust quality assurance process. A particular strength is the staff mentoring programme which has raised the quality of classroom practice.

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

Numerous intervention strategies support teaching and learning and the school has invested financially in supporting these. These include an effective transition programme from Year 6-7, as well as from Year 11 to Post 16.

The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is designed around personalised pathways and rooted in robust data analysis. The department recognised that it needed to build skills at Key Stage 3 to equip them for examination success at Key Stage 4. Consequently, continuity of staffing is prioritised for each class from Year 7 to Year 8. This ensures that teachers know these pupils well, they can identify weaknesses and accelerate progress over this crucial two-year phase.

In Year 8, there is a targeted 'stretch and challenge' group of ten pupils who entered the school on a level 6. They meet once per fortnight and undertake an independent project which is helping to raise their aspirations.

Staff within the English department share their expertise with other schools. For example, transition work is now embedded in three other schools and presentations on pupil premium strategies have been given to senior leaders at local conferences.

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

There has been a rapid improvement in the English department in terms of outcomes. At KS4, English literature results have improved from 70% in 2014 to 86% in 2016. English language results have remained high over the last three years at 83%. Progress levels at Key Stage 4 in 2016 were very high with 91% of pupils achieving 3 levels of progress and 52% 4 levels of progress. The in-school gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils

has diminished over time and disappeared completely in 2016. 85% of disadvantaged pupils gained an A*-C in either English language or literature in 2016.

A level results in English have achieved an ALPS grade 2 for the last 3 years. A*-B grades have improved from 41% in 2014 to 59% in 2016.

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

Following discussion with the Headteacher, the school would not like any further support at this time. However, the school has a very strong relationship with Royal Wootton Bassett Challenge Partner hub school and the support from them is ongoing and greatly valued by Wyedean.

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.