



## QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

### REVIEW REPORT FOR GORDANO SCHOOL

<b>Name of School:</b>	Gordano School
<b>Headteacher/Principal:</b>	Louise Blundell
<b>Hub:</b>	Lighthouse Hub
<b>School phase:</b>	11-18
<b>MAT (if applicable):</b>	Lighthouse Schools Partnership

<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:</b>	Effective
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	17/01/2025
<b>Overall Estimate at last QA Review</b>	Effective
<b>Date of last QA Review</b>	16/11/2022
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	Good
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	30/04/2024

**Quality Assurance Review**

The review team, comprising host school leaders and visiting reviewers, agrees 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**                      Accredited  
Inclusion: A whole school ethos

**Previously accredited valid areas  
of excellence**                      Not applicable

**Overall peer evaluation estimate**      Effective

**Important information**

- The QA Review provides a peer evaluation of a school's practice in curriculum, teaching and learning, and leadership. It is a voluntary and developmental process, and the peer review team can evaluate and offer 'peer evaluation estimates' based only on what the school chooses to share with them.
- The QA Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades. The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is developmental not judgmental.
- The QA Review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. If you choose to share this report, or extracts thereof, externally (e.g. on your website or with parents), please ensure that it is accompanied with the following text:

*Challenge Partners is a charity working to advance education for the public benefit. We are not a statutory accountability body. The QA Review does not audit schools' safeguarding or behaviour policies and practices. However, Lead Reviewers and visiting reviewers are expected to follow Challenge Partners' safeguarding policy and report any concerns as set out in the procedures.*

## **1. Context and character of the school**

Gordano School is a very large 11-18 school situated in the seaside town of Portishead, close to Bristol. It is the only secondary school serving the town. The school is located in an area of deprivation and is oversubscribed. Currently, there are over 2150 students on roll, with just under four hundred students in the sixth form. Gordano School is part of the Lighthouse Schools Partnership, which consists of four primary schools and four secondary schools.

The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is broadly average, although this number is increasing. The proportion of students with an education health care plan (EHCP) is slightly above the national average. About one-eighth of students are disadvantaged which is below the national average. Around one in twenty students have English as an additional language (EAL) which is well below the national average.

The headteacher and one deputy headteacher took up their appointments in September 2022. The school's mission is to 'provide a rich and rewarding learning journey, empowering all students to be positively engaged and contribute to their communities'.

### **2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well**

- Leaders are very committed to their moral vision of inclusive education. High expectations for all are combined with a warm and positive ethos which permeates the whole school. Resilience and teamwork are emphasised, along with positive attitudes to others. The school successfully promotes and cultivates values such as kindness, respect, and personal organization. The headteacher is ambitious for all students, who are encouraged to 'dream big', 'do your best', and 'give back'.
- The house system fosters a strong sense of belonging and community, creating a family approach in a large school. Students enjoy the unity and motivation that comes from being part of a house. Heads of house have worked with leaders to refine systems and set clear expectations. There is a greater consistency of approach and a successful focus on positive rewards and restorative practice.
- Knowledgeable and committed middle leaders drive improvements and are able to undertake quality assurance in other subject areas. Leaders have worked closely with staff to develop the culture of the school and have

managed their workload well. Professional learning for staff is based upon knowing and understanding each student as an individual. Training is well planned to match the school aims, while being carefully tailored to staff needs. The school has adapted its training programme, based upon ongoing assessments and feedback from staff and students. Training is extensive and includes the Challenge Partners middle leaders programme, training within the trust network and National Professional Qualification (NPQ) opportunities.

- The curriculum is ambitious and accessible for all students. It prioritises powerful knowledge and is designed to ensure that all students, including disadvantaged students and those with additional needs, are supported and challenged appropriately.
- The inclusive ethos is the foundation for the universal approaches to teaching and learning. The 'Gordano Learning' programme offers a coherent and evidence based approach, highlighting a strong commitment to planning and delivering high quality lessons.
- Transition is strong. There are four primary feeder schools which are part of the trust, which means that staff know their incoming students and the curriculum they have been taught.
- Interventions and support systems are in place to help students progress and achieve their full potential. The school tracks historic outcomes and uses data to inform decisions about interventions and support. Students are aware that their progress is monitored and that staff are invested in helping them to reach their potential.
- Leaders actively use the voice of students to develop the school culture even further. Student voice and student leadership ensure the school is inclusive. Regular feedback informs strategies, and systems are adapted to ensure they are effective and relevant.

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

- ... Key Stage 3 data were used in a more granular way to plan, monitor and evaluate interventions.
- ... middle leaders were able to reflect upon and articulate the adaptive teaching strategies used in their subject areas.

### **3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well**

- The ethos of inclusion is woven throughout all aspects of school life, from teaching strategies to extracurricular activities, as well as academic and pastoral support. Gordano School has a warm and highly inclusive learning environment, with positive relationships between students and staff. The inclusive ethos is exemplified in the relational approaches taken by leaders and staff. Students cooperate well with each other, are polite and considerate, and frequently demonstrate kindness to others. Their behaviour in lessons is excellent.
- Assemblies reinforce the school values. Students are encouraged to 'dream big' and 'do your best'. Students say they are supported both academically and personally, with a focus on making students feel seen and valued. They say that 'everyone is getting what they need in order to be successful.'
- In form tutor time, students receive a warm welcome and key messages are given about kindness, resilience and personal organisation. Students are able to reflect upon ideas such as the difference between equity and equality. Form tutors encourage literacy by reading high quality texts using a visualiser. The consistent approach includes regular equipment checks and this helps students to organise themselves.
- Teachers draw upon their strong subject knowledge to explain specialist knowledge and concepts very clearly and accurately, and to anticipate any potential misconceptions. This further enhances the culture of mutual respect in lessons.
- The use of 'do now' activities and 'TRIO' (time for reflection, improvement and organisation) help engage students from the start of the lesson, reinforcing key concepts and enabling students to articulate how they have progressed.
- Teachers know their students well. They use a variety of strategies, such as 'warm calling', scaffolding, and one to one feedback, to ensure that all are actively engaged and making progress. Students are regularly asked to give feedback and to share their answers. Assessment practices allow teachers to quickly identify when students are struggling and adjust tasks accordingly. Formative assessment and retrieval activities help reinforce learning and ensure students retain knowledge.
- There are waves of pastoral and academic intervention and support, as well as bespoke approaches to support students with additional needs or other barriers to learning. Personalised interventions are based on thorough analysis of student data, and provisions are continually adapted to meet each student's evolving needs.

- Inclusion underpins the extensive extra-curricular offer. Students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh programme. The school offers a range of free and subsidised activities, ensuring that all students can participate in enrichment opportunities. The rewards system is linked to participation in extracurricular activities and helps motivate students to engage fully and achieve well.
- Students take active roles in shaping the school community through the school council and other leadership opportunities. Students support each other extremely well. The peer mentoring programme, where Year 11 students support Year 8 students, is a powerful example of students promoting a real sense of community.
- Sixth form students enjoy their lessons and are often excited to learn. Teachers are enthusiastic and explain challenging knowledge and skills very well. This makes learning less daunting and builds confidence. Sixth form students take a lead, for example editing the excellent 'Griffin' school magazine.
- The focus on both academic success and personal development has created a well rounded approach to student growth. All students, regardless of background or need, have the opportunity to excel. The school prepares students for the next stages in their education or career, ensuring that all students, including those with additional needs, have clear and personalised pathways which maximise their life chances.

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

- ... higher ability students were given more opportunities to be challenged in lessons.
- ... there were even more opportunities for discussion in lessons.

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

- Disadvantaged students at Gordano School achieve very nearly as well as non-disadvantaged students nationally, highlighting the effectiveness of leadership, teaching and interventions. Leaders are highly involved in developing and adapting provisions for SEND and disadvantaged students, including regularly monitoring progress and evaluating data.

- Teachers receive detailed information about students' needs and produce personalised and detailed seating plans. The newly appointed SENDCo works very closely with the assistant headteacher for inclusion to train teachers on how to adapt their teaching strategies, check for understanding, and support students in completing work. They observe lessons, provide individualised support, and ensure tailored action plans are in place.
- The curriculum is flexible, with specific provisions such as the Learning Hub and vocational courses to cater to individual needs and interests. For example, the Inspire Pathway offers functional skills and career preparation, while the nurture provision addresses SEMH needs and helps build students' self-esteem and academic skills. Personalised feedback and tailored interventions ensure that students can succeed.
- Reasonable adjustments are made for SEND students, including the use of mini whiteboards in mathematics lessons, and scaffolding and laptops for students working on extended writing tasks.
- School Team Around the Child meetings are a key strategy for providing targeted support, with staff collaboratively discussing individual student needs and creating purposeful action plans.
- Students have access to safe spaces, work experience, respite provisions, and nurture hubs, helping them manage their emotions and build their sense of belonging. Support for Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) has been tailored for individual students, with successful impact to reduce absenteeism through personalised approaches and the early identification of at risk students.
- Students in the nurture and learning hubs, and student support, are very well motivated and clearly developing their social skills. They receive highly skilled teaching and input from well qualified staff, and thrive as a result. In many cases, the support given to them has been life changing.

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

- ... adaptations for students with additional needs were more embedded in all lessons.
- ... small group teaching of those students needing additional support in lessons were more embedded.



## **5. Area of Excellence**

Inclusion: A whole school ethos

### **Accredited**

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

Professional learning for staff and the active role of student voice and leadership demonstrate a holistic approach to fostering an inclusive culture. The overarching goal is to inspire all learners to strive for excellence and contribute positively to their community, with a specific emphasis on the needs of disadvantaged students.

There a wide range of tailored interventions and support strategies to ensure that all students can succeed. Short-term timed interventions address specific gaps in skills or knowledge, helping students better access the full curriculum in the future. Teachers provide additional help within the classroom to ensure all students, particularly those who need extra assistance, can fully participate in lessons. The school offers various routes for students, including Core Support for subjects like Maths and English, as well as vocational options for those who may benefit from a more practical approach to learning.

Learning Hub provision is a dedicated space for students who are not following a full suite of Level 2 qualifications, often due to SEND, social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, medical, or other needs. This provision includes supported lessons, life skills training, functional skills qualifications, and independent revision opportunities.

The Nurture Hub provides high quality support for nine Year 7 students at risk of poor attendance. This provision is available for students with SEMH needs identified by the SENDCos at the primary school and Gordano School.

For students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), there may be an opportunity to access external programs, such as those at Portishead Youth Centre, Banwell Equestrian Centre, or Early College placements. This provision is tailored to individual needs and may include offsite learning.



Students may also have opportunities for work experience, either with the school's site team or with external providers, offering practical, real-world learning experiences. The school uses a data driven approach to support students with SEND, analysing a range of assessments to inform individualised support plans.

Inclusion underpins school life. Quality assurance and staff training focus upon provision for disadvantaged students and students with SEND. The provision map outlines over 150 personalised and highly effective interventions. The school's pastoral and house system also successfully promote inclusion.

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

Last academic year the outcomes for disadvantaged students improved significantly in comparison to previous years, with Progress 8 measures improving from  $-0.48$  to  $-0.07$ . The number of exits overall has reduced significantly over the last year.

Forty one students have access to the refocus rooms. This is a reduction from sixty students with access to the same area last academic year, and one hundred and twenty students the year before this, and demonstrates that the provision is having a positive impact.

Emotional support, counselling and guidance, and pastoral care have created a safe and supportive environment. The mental health pathway, and focus upon physical health and social skills, have improved student wellbeing.

Incentives and recognition, individual support plans, and personalised interventions, have further improved behaviour and attendance. Mentoring and peer support have built positive relationships. Transition support ensures that students feel prepared and confident in their learning journey.

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

Charlotte Thomas/Julie Caswell  
Assistant Headteacher Inclusion/SENDCo



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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, we encourage you to share the main findings with your hub/hub manager so that they can support your hub's activity planning. Challenge Partners will also collate and analyse content reports from across the hub networks including using AI tools to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector (sharing these with the partnership) each year. The QA Review reports remain confidential to Challenge Partners and the host school. This ensures that schools embrace the review as a development process, acting as a catalyst for their ongoing improvement. This is the primary purpose of the QA review. However, our aim is that the thematic analysis will demonstrate the additional value of a sector wide overview, illustrated with real-life examples.

For further support following your QA Review, 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. The School Support Directory can be accessed via the Challenge Partners website. (<https://www.challengepartners.org/>)

Finally, following the QA Review, schools may find it useful to refer to research such as the EEF toolkit to help inform their approach to tackling the EBIs identified in the report (<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit>)