



## QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

### REVIEW REPORT FOR RIVERWALK SCHOOL

<b>Name of School:</b>	Riverwalk School
<b>Headteacher/Principal:</b>	Lukasz Rumanowski
<b>Hub:</b>	East Coast Hub
<b>School phase:</b>	Special
<b>MAT (if applicable):</b>	Consortium Trust

<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:</b>	The school chose not to have estimates
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	27/11/2024
<b>Overall Estimate at last QA Review</b>	N/A
<b>Date of last QA Review</b>	24/04/2024
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	Good
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	16/07/2024

## **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** N/A

**Quality of provision and outcomes** N/A

### **AND**

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

**Area of excellence** N/A

**Previously accredited valid areas of excellence** N/A

**Overall peer evaluation estimate** N/A

### **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**

Riverwalk School is an all-through special school located just outside Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk. It serves students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) from all over the county, with just over one third from disadvantaged backgrounds. The primary diagnoses are autism, profound, severe and complex needs. Currently, there are 218 students on roll aged 4 -19. Three quarters of these are boys. All students who attend the school have an education, health and care plan (EHCP). Provision currently operates across two sites with Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), a short drive away from the main campus.

The Riverwalk campus is split into distinct areas: 'College' housing post-16 students, whilst 'Raise' hosts secondary aged students who often pose a risk to other students; and, 'Integrated Learning' for a number of students with exceptionally complex needs. Students in 'Raise' and 'Integrated Learning' often display exceptionally challenging behaviours.

Riverwalk School transferred to the Consortium Trust in September 2023 after a difficult period of turbulence at senior leadership level. The new headteacher has been in post for just over a year, with a newly appointed senior leadership team (SLT) who are all new to leadership roles.

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

- The new headteacher has instigated transformational change in a very short space of time. The trust has been instrumental in supporting him with a clear vision of providing the best possible education for their students. Leaders have responded with urgency and made a number of essential structural changes to develop leadership capacity within the school. This has led to a positive Ofsted experience in July 2024. Leaders are determined to build on this and continue to set high expectations so that they can enact planned and sustainable improvement.
- The SLT and wider leadership team are being supported well by the trust and external advisors. This has led to positive collaboration with a partner special school in the trust which has helped to develop systemic thinking and the implementation of initiatives, such as the new assessment policy.
- Newly appointed senior leaders are now holding middle leaders and teachers to account. They do so in a supportive fashion and are working collaboratively to rebuild a curriculum that suits the needs of all learners. For example, the lead for teaching and learning checks that half termly and weekly overviews are in place for all teachers.

- The trust has been helpful in providing support and expertise in the form of external reviews from sector specialists that provide specific and helpful next steps.
- Leaders and teachers promote a positive climate for learning that is founded on kindness. They place great emphasis on knowing their students well and this is seen in interactions with them. This means that adults know how to keep students focussed and engaged. The school promotes inclusivity and this was embodied by the 'Friday Fun Café' where classes take turns to bake cakes and biscuits for the school community in a social setting where all students can mix freely and socially. Students love this and treat each other well no matter their age or stage.
- Personal development is threaded through the six main curriculum areas of delivery which is centred on helping students become as independent as possible in preparation for life beyond Riverwalk. This includes giving students a wider range of experiences. Leaders are determined and tenacious in making sure that the providers make essential adaptations to remove barriers to enable participation; for instance, providing extra funding and self-inflating tents to enable access for a Duke of Edinburgh camping trip. They have also worked hard with parents to help them expand their horizons on what is possible for their children no matter the obstacles.

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

... leaders redoubled their efforts to engage with parents who hold negative views of the school to mitigate against erroneous assumptions and historical misconceptions.

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

- The curriculum is built around three pathways: Explorers, Adventurers, and Discoverers. Students work through these pathways as they move through the school at a level that is consistent with their needs and progression. The 'Explore' pathway is for those with the most complex needs, and those that are more able take the 'Discover' pathway. Some students follow a blend of 'Explore' and 'Discover' depending on their starting point. Often classes have a mix of students on two different pathways, one of them being dominant.
- The curriculum is split into six main areas. These are: Communication and Social Interaction, Physical and Sensory development, Investigation and

Challenge, Wellbeing and Independence, Imagination and Creativity and Encounter and Explore. These are cross referenced with consortium trust drivers. Elements of the National Curriculum are mapped distinctly into the six areas. Subject leaders are currently developing the academic content to help teachers plan and deliver learning which is sequential and progressive. The school adapts some of the commercial schemes of work, such as White Rose.

- Provision to meet EHCP targets is more established and staff are used to developing content that helps students make incremental progress towards their targets. They are now adapting their practice so that schemes of learning identify key concepts and learning intentions for staff to use in their planning to meet broader curriculum targets, as well as those at an individual level.
- This planning is aided by the therapeutic team who offer advice and guidance on how to adapt and plan activities for individual targets.
- The EYFS curriculum is separate to this and the EYFS leader has adapted thorough planning to extrapolate backwards from the learning goals of the six curriculum areas. Extra pre-steps are added that support learning and development incredibly well. As a result, task design and implementation is strong. For example, during snack time, students were using adapted picture boards to communicate feelings as well as preferences.
- The school uses a dedicated phonics scheme, Twinkl, that has been chosen carefully because of its adaptability. Trained staff have started to deliver a blend of environmental and pre-phonics sounds with as much fidelity to the scheme as possible. This is resulting in students starting to engage in learning phonics, where appropriate.
- Teachers are developing subject specific knowledge and pedagogy with encouragement from their SLT line managers. They do this in collaboration with a partner school in the trust. This has led to writing schemes of learning with a more academic focus in the six curriculum areas; for example, incorporating much more science in Investigate and Challenge.
- Assessment learning journeys are used to capture daily observations with both written and photographic evidence. These are used to assess against individual EHCP targets. This is stronger in EYFS because the secure planning provides many opportunities for staff to capture successful interactions. The school is evolving how it captures this information in a more homogenous way using an electronic platform to develop consistency of practice.
- Relationships between adults and students at Riverwalk are kind and trusting. This is recognised by the vast majority of parents who articulate that their child has improved their quality of life as well as their education since

attending Riverwalk. The therapeutic offer for self-regulation is evident in classrooms that have thoughtful layouts with group and individual spaces so that students can regulate with minimal assistance. This is supplemented with a dedicated suite of rooms with a mixture of soft-play, sensory equipment and swings that provide respite for students when needed.

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

- ... teachers consistently matched task design to key ideas and concepts outlined in curriculum content.
- ... pedagogy took into account the suitability of whole class, group and individual starting points.

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

- Leaders are aware that there has been much change at a fast and necessary pace over the last eighteen months. The headteacher and his team have recognised the need to streamline development and improvement planning to focus on three main areas: curriculum development, assessment and engagement with parents.
- Leaders have worked hard to promote a culture of positive change that puts the needs of the students at the heart of what they do. This has resulted in higher expectations of staff.
- The vast majority of staff have welcomed the changes and now have a variety of systems at their disposal from the school and trust to help them deliver learning more collaboratively and, increasingly, more consistently.
- Staff say that there is a lot of work to do but understand the need for it because leaders have articulated expectations clearly. As a result, most staff have an understanding of why they have been asked to do more or do things differently.
- Leaders are keen to move to a distributed leadership model and are currently working with subject leads to develop their capacity to plan and implement schemes of learning. They have aided this by recognising where there are gaps in some teachers' subject knowledge and secured training for them in these areas.

- All staff now have consistent and regular performance management which is developmental in nature. This ensures that staff get the necessary training to perform their roles to expectation.

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

... leaders continued to develop the quality assurance process to ensure that lesson planning is detailed and granular by reinforcing non-negotiables using the teaching standards.

#### **5. Area of Excellence**

The school did not propose an Area of Excellence for this review.

#### **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



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report (<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit>)