

## Written Report

### CHALLENGE PARTNERS: Quality Assurance Review Written Report

<b>Name of School:</b>	St James School
<b>School Address:</b>	Summer Lane, Exeter EX4 8NN
<b>Hub School:</b>	South West Teaching School Alliance (Kingsbridge/Ivybridge)

<b>Telephone Number:</b>	01392 209922
<b>Email address:</b>	admin@st-james.devon.sch.uk

<b>Unique Reference Number:</b>	113507
<b>Local Authority:</b>	Devon
<b>Type of School:</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School Category:</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils:</b>	11-16
<b>Number on roll:</b>	656
<b>Head teacher/Principal:</b>	Mrs Moira Marder

<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	11-12 November 2009
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	Good

<b>Date of Quality Assurance Review:</b>	14-15 January 2014
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## QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW – SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES

<b>School Improvement Strategies:</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Achievement:</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Quality of Teaching:</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Area of Excellent Practice:</b>	
<b>The use of the Pupil Premium funding</b>	<b>Confirmed</b>

### Overall Review Evaluation

The Quality Assurance Review found indicators that St James School appears to be at the top of the Good grade as judged by Ofsted in the school's previous Ofsted report in November 2009 and is working towards Outstanding.

## Information about the school

- St James School is a smaller-than-average school.
- The proportion of students who are eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for those entitled to free school meals and those in local authority care, is above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is well above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is average. Many of these students have behavioural or emotional difficulties or have autism.
- There are many more boys than girls in the school, especially in Year 8.
- Many students arrive at the school at times other than at the start of Year 7.

## School Improvement Strategies

### What Went Well

- The senior leaders have a very strong vision of where they want the school to be and how to get there. They are highly committed to ensuring that every pupil makes good or outstanding progress during their time at the school. Students are known personally to all staff who take great pride in seeing students develop.
- The school has a very accurate view of its strengths and areas where it is still improving. It bases this on detailed analysis of its results and on rigorous and regular monitoring of the quality of teaching. Leaders provide focused professional development for all staff. This is underpinned by highly robust performance management which encourages, challenges and supports teachers' improvement. As a result, teaching is good and improving.
- The school is well aware of where provision within subjects is improving and where it is not. It has effective strategies in place to support weaker subject areas to become good.
- Steps have been taken to ensure the middle leaders are more accountable for the student outcomes and the development of the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme. The close monitoring and support established with the English and Maths departments have ensured a marked improvement in attainment and overall outcomes for the students in these areas.
- The areas which have been identified as in need of further work, such as the progress of the most- and least-able students and the need for appropriate challenge in lessons, have been a focus for all staff and improvements are evident.
- Training in marking and assessment has had a noticeable impact in some subject areas where students are getting good information about what they need to do to improve and work in books shows that they are heeding the advice and their work is improving. Marking has improved in several subjects, with English being a particularly good example.
- Students' literacy has improved because teachers focus on this in lessons and provide feedback for students when marking their work. Some students have also had extra support to help them improve their reading and writing and this has been very beneficial.
- The school has accurately identified the significant strengths in its provision for those in receipt of the pupil premium and these students' performance has improved; the gap between the

attainment of those who receive the pupil premium and those who do not is smaller than that seen nationally and is set to reduce still further.

- The school has evaluated the impact of its curriculum and the data shows students are making good progress on the non-GCSE courses.

#### Even better if...

- ...documentation made clearer that the support which has been put into some subject areas, such as science and languages, has resulted in improved teaching.
- ...inconsistencies in the quality of marking and assessment were reduced.
- ...the school were clearer in its documentation about which groups of students were making good and outstanding progress, especially those who have special educational needs or disabilities and boys and girls.
- ...data on KS3 were more closely analysed to show students' progress in this key stage.
- ...middle leaders were even more involved in evaluating the quality of teaching in their subject area.

### **Pupil Achievement**

- Students arrive at the school with attainment that is well below what would be expected nationally.
- Information on the attainment and progress of students in Key Stage 3 (KS3) was not readily available. Work seen in class and books indicates that by the end of Year 9, low- and middle-ability students are making good progress but the progress of the most able was less good.
- In 2013, students in Year 11 attained well above the national average for 5A\*-C (93% compared to 82.6% nationally) and did particularly well in their best 8 subjects. This trend has improved over the past three years. In 2013 students attained below the national average for 5 A\*C including English and mathematics (53% compared to 60% nationally) but these students had very weak scores when they started school.
- In 2013, 61% of students achieved an A\*-C in English which was slightly below the national figures (67%) and these results have improved for the past 3 years. Maths results have fluctuated but are still below the national average (64% in 2013 compared to the national figure of 70%). 100% of students attained 5 A\*-G grades which was significantly higher than the national figure.
- In 2013, good or better progress was noted in Maths, English language, English literature, Art, Drama and Media but there was insufficient progress in French and Science. The school is well aware of where provision is improving and where it is not and has effective strategies in place to support these subject areas.
- The progress of those students with special education needs or disabilities and those who are in receipt of the pupil premium is better than that of the most able. In 2013, all groups of students made progress roughly in line with what would be expected nationally in English and Maths, although the more able did less well than would be expected nationally in Maths. For students currently in school there are indications that there will be a rise in the numbers of students making 4+ levels of progress in English.
- Although in 2013, boys did not do as well as girls by a larger margin than seen nationally, they still made good progress from their starting points.

- 16% of students achieved the Ebacc award in 2013, but this has risen to 24% for the current Year 11 because of good guidance about their Key Stage 4 options. The school has evaluated the impact of the curriculum and the data shows students doing well on non-GCSE courses.
- The school does not have Post-16 students but it takes their progression very seriously and has accurate information to show that the number of NEETS is declining and that more students are progressing into further education.

## Quality of teaching

The school selected the lessons to be observed. Lessons seen were mostly in KS4 and covered a selection of subject areas where the school required verification of its own judgments.

### What went well

- Staff know students extremely well and are able to plan lessons which are carefully tailored to the needs and abilities of the students in each class.
- The teachers know their subjects well and are keen to share their enthusiasm for the subject with students. Students were highly motivated to learn and often asked questions about their work to improve still further.
- Behaviour both in and out of lessons is very good; students respond well to the teaching and relationships are very strong.
- Marking has improved, especially in subjects such as English where students are clear what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Work in books clearly shows that they have made very good progress in several subject areas.
- In several lessons, group work was well structured and was well organised so that students did not waste any time and got to articulate and justify their views to others.
- Teachers are good at planning tasks which support those who find aspects of learning difficult and there is a plethora of support outside the classroom available to students to ensure that they get all the help they need in order to succeed.
- Homework is well planned and regularly completed. Students were particularly keen on the systems for doing Maths homework online.

### Even better if...

- ...teaching assistants and other staff supported students without doing work for them.
- ...students were encouraged to find out things for themselves, for example by looking things up in their books before asking a teacher for the answer.
- ...teachers always planned suitably challenging tasks for all the students in the class, especially the more-able students.
- ...the high quality of marking evident in some subjects was consistent across all subjects to enable all students to know how they were doing and their next steps.

## Quality of Area of Excellent Practice

### The use of the Pupil Premium

- The school is highly committed to ensuring that all students achieve as well as they can and carefully monitors the progress of all its students. It has a larger-than-average proportion of students who are in receipt of the pupil premium. It has detailed tracking and analysis to show that this group of students is making accelerated progress and the gap between the progress that these students make and their peers is reducing. Data shows that these students will soon be making better progress than other groups in school because of the highly effective interventions that are in place.
- The school takes into account national research on strategies that are likely to be most effective when deciding what to do next and is relentless in ensuring that everything it does is evaluated; it only pursues strategies that it can prove are effective.
- The school sets itself very ambitious targets for these students, not only in terms of their progress in subjects, but also in terms of the number that remain in education or training post 16, their reading ages and their overall literacy, their attendance and their participation in extra-curricular activities. It has been very successful in all these areas.
- In order to improve the attainment and progress of these students, it has appointed a member of the Senior Leadership Team who has specific responsibility for this area along with Heads of KS3 and KS4. It has allocated funding to research within school for individual teachers and has been involved in the 'Challenge the Gap' project.
- The school ensures that every member of staff has detailed information on the students in their classes and that all staff are responsible for the progress that these students make. Each member of staff has to report separately on the progress of pupil premium students and this forms part of both the personal and departmental accountability measures.
- An area which has been very successful is improving students' basic literacy. The school has employed a range of strategies including reading mentors and specific support to enable students to improve their reading skills.
- The school has also been particularly successful in increasing the attendance of these students. It has employed a home-school worker to monitor attendance and to be the contact point for parents of these students. It also works with a range of external partners to support attendance and encourages students to start school early and leave later.
- It has tried hard to engage parents and to encourage them to have high ambitions for their children. This has been very beneficial in encouraging students to attend school and to aim for further education post 16.
- Students are made aware of exactly how they are doing and given personal advice about how to improve. They are given some say in how the funding is being used and can specify certain things they would like more support with, for example music tuition or support for trips and visits. Students say they are constantly supported, describing their teachers as 'magic' and '[knowing] everything about me' and saying they 'really care'.

### Partnerships

The school has been part of the Challenge Partnership for two years and has made good use of the contacts and training opportunities provided as well as providing training and support for other schools.

It has used the 'Outstanding Teacher' and 'Developing Teacher' programmes to good effect to improve the quality of teaching in the school and has contributed to joint training on assessment and data analysis. It has offered training on English and Maths to local schools and has had support from a local Subject Leader for Languages .

It has participated fully in the community arts programme organised by the local hub.

**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.**