



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR
ELLACOMBE C of E ACADEMY

Name of School:	Ellacombe C of E Academy
Head teacher/Principal:	Evie Semmens
Hub:	Torbay
School type:	Academy
MAT (if applicable):	Learning Academy Partnership

Estimate at this QA Review:	GOOD
Date of this Review:	27/02/2019
Estimate at last QA Review	GOOD
Date of last QA Review	04/12/2017
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	GOOD
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	10/07/2018

Quality Assurance Review

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

School Improvement Strategies	OUTSTANDING
Outcomes for Pupils	GOOD
Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment	GOOD
Area of Excellence	Not submitted for this review
Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence	Early Years Foundation Stage 04/12/2017
Overall Estimate	GOOD

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. Context and character of the school

- Ellacombe C of E Academy is a growing two-form entry primary school serving the most deprived ward in Torbay. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average and most come from the immediate urban area. The school is part of a wider community, the Learning Academy Partnership, which is a multi-academy trust of eight primary schools across Torbay and Devon.

The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than the national figures, as is the proportion of pupils who speak a first language other than English. The number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is currently in line with the national average and is increasing. The school places high importance on tailoring provision for pupils with additional needs. There is a full-time non-teaching special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), two family support workers and a nurture class to address the needs of targeted pupils.

The school's culture is very much one of inclusivity, and the Christian ethos is central to its vision. The school is rooted in its local community and does a great deal of work to provide experiences for pupils that they would not otherwise have, such as taking them on trips to the seaside.

Following an exciting £800,000 refurbishment of its nursery provision, Little Stars Childcare Centre reopened in Ellacombe in September 2018 for children aged between two and four years. Pupil numbers have grown enormously since it opened. The provision offers a safe, happy and stimulating environment where children can thrive, grow and have fun.

2.1 School Improvement Strategies - Progress from previous EBIs

- Since the previous review, the school's self-evaluation has been re-written to reflect the ethos of the school fully. Systems to track pupils' progress are more robust and leaders now have a clearer picture of the progress of pupils who join the school mid-way through the year. The family support team meets new parents early on to gather important information about new pupils, which is then used to plan wide-ranging support. As a result, pupils joining the school make a flying start.

Science learning now focuses more sharply on developing children's '*Working Scientifically*' skills. The science leader has reviewed the curriculum to build pupils' scientific skills and knowledge more sequentially. In addition, teachers receive regular training to enhance their science subject knowledge. Pupils said how much they enjoyed science lessons, especially the practical experiments. As

a result, pupils are now making stronger progress in science.

2.2 School Improvement Strategies - What went well

- Very strong leadership by the headteacher and her senior team, ably supported by talented teachers and support staff, is resulting in rapid ongoing improvement. There is a great sense of collegiality in the school. Staff are passionate about wanting the very best for all their pupils. The school's vision '*together we take strides towards a brighter future*' is underpinned by the multi academy trust's vision '*together we empower excellence.*' These statements drive all actions and, as one leader said, they are 'lived not laminated.'
- The headteacher has a high degree of trust and confidence in all staff and professional training is a top priority. Staff at all levels are encouraged to innovate, make decisions and share good practice, which one staff member described as 'extremely empowering.'
- The school is constantly thinking of ways to support the high number of disadvantaged families whose children attend the school. The family support workers and the SENCO are fundamental in building relationships with these families. The support team is a constant presence, even during the school holidays. They have an extensive knowledge of these families' circumstances and provide workshops, advice and practical help, such as food parcels, to families in need. As a result, vulnerable pupils feel cared for and make excellent social and academic progress.
- The academy's membership of the multi-academy trust (MAT) is fundamental to its development. Headteachers of all eight schools share joint responsibility for the outcomes of all pupils. They meet weekly to discuss their successes and difficulties and to offer mutual support and challenge. Cross-MAT professional training is a high priority for both teaching and support staff, and the sharing of expertise is extremely well established. Staff hugely value the developmental and career opportunities the MAT provides.
- The school returned to its original faith-based foundations two years ago. The Christian ethos pervades the school and helps pupils and parents to develop a spiritual awareness of themselves and the wider world. As a result, pupils demonstrate a strong understanding of positive values such as forgiveness and reconciliation. They accept and embrace each other's differences.
- As a result of regular and ongoing assessment, teachers are able to plug gaps in pupils' learning swiftly, enabling them to make faster progress. A wide range of targeted interventions are quickly implemented to meet pupils' needs.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are held robustly to account for the progress pupils are making. Performance management systems are rigorous. Regular discussions take place between senior leaders and other staff about pupils' progress.
- The recently opened Little Stars Childcare Centre welcomes children from two years old, enabling school staff to have a positive impact on children's development from an earlier age. Leaders are already seeing the benefits of this

early support on children's readiness to learn.

2.3 School Improvement Strategies - Even better if...

- ...the school self-evaluation document and the academy improvement plan were even more closely aligned, so that areas for improvement flowed from one to the other more clearly.
- ...leaders continued to review the curriculum, particularly in the foundation subjects, to ensure pupils' skills and knowledge are being developed in a coherent sequence.

3.1 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Progress from previous EBIs

- Since the previous review, school leaders have worked hard to develop pupils' skills of practice and retrieval in English. In mathematics, pupils are developing the use of journaling and their reasoning skills are progressing well. Teachers' questioning has become more challenging and pupils are routinely expected to build upon their first answers. Pupils are encouraged to question each other and develop higher level thinking skills such as explaining, reasoning, describing and proving.

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

- There is a warm and welcoming ethos which pervades the academy. From the early years onwards, pupils are attentive and keen to do well. As a result, pupils feel both motivated and safe to learn, so their level of engagement is high.
- Classrooms and corridors are bright and vibrant with excellent displays to stimulate pupils' imagination and support their thinking. Examples of pupils' writing are proudly displayed and pupils' work is constantly celebrated.
- Teaching in the early years strikes an excellent balance between developing children's learning behaviours and promoting creativity. The school's approach to teaching phonics is highly organised and sharply focussed, resulting in excellent outcomes.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils themselves are extremely positive. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in every lesson. Pupils collaborate willingly and are quick to help each other. For example, in a Year 6 reading lesson, one pupil patiently helped her partner to decode a series of difficult words.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and classroom routines are very well established. Pupils set to work quickly and follow instructions without any fuss.

Consequently, little learning time is lost. Pupils' books are well presented and they demonstrate a pride in their work. They are encouraged to grapple with problems and show a good level of resilience when they find work difficult.

- Pupils recognise and appreciate the academy's friendly, supportive and highly aspirational environment. One pupil proudly stated that he is aiming to become a palaeontologist, and another said, 'Ellacombe encourages me to be the best that I can be.'
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and they plan lessons thoughtfully, using high quality resources. Where teaching is strongest, it is well sequenced and builds on prior learning. There is clear use of spelling, punctuation and grammar which is having a positive impact on the quality of pupils' writing.
- The school's work to build pupils' vocabulary is having a marked impact on developing their oracy skills. Pupils speak confidently and with expression and they are able to use words in different contexts. For example, one Year 3 pupil was asked the meaning of 'ferocious' in the sentence *'the ferocious sun shone'*. He explained the meaning perfectly in this context, and then, unprompted, used the word to draw a comparison with a wild animal.
- Teachers skilfully model learning using subject specific vocabulary which helps pupils to make faster progress. Careful questioning allows teachers to assess pupils' understanding of new concepts and to encourage them to build on their initial answers.
- Teaching assistants (TAs) are highly trained and contribute a great deal to helping pupils to access learning. Teachers and pupils greatly value their skill and expertise.

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

...teachers planned work to make the most able pupils think harder

...teachers gave pupils more opportunities to lead their learning, especially in writing.

4. Outcomes for Pupils

- Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at a low level of development and make rapid and sustained progress. They achieve very well across all areas of learning. The proportion reaching a good level of development has been well above average for several years.
- Children's communication skills develop quickly because of the high-quality teaching they receive. They speak confidently and listen with understanding. The school's relentless focus on phonics has yielded sustained high-quality outcomes over time. In 2018, 96% of pupils reached the expected level, continuing the impressive track-record over the past few years.
- In Key Stage 1, attainment in 2018 was once again above the national average at the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' achieved above the national average at greater depth in writing and mathematics, although

reading was slightly weaker.

- Outcomes at Key Stage 2 in 2018 showed a marked improvement on the previous year. 85% of pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's reading strategy made a particular difference to pupils' reading outcomes, which improved from below average in 2017 to well above average in 2018. Similarly, the number of pupils achieving at greater depth across all three disciplines was greatly improved on the previous year and exceeded the national average.
- Lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' workbooks shows that current pupils in the school are making good, and sometimes better, progress from their starting points in the majority of year groups.
- Leaders recognise that, although much improved, pupils' writing skills are not yet matching their high-level reading and mathematical expertise. A number of strategies have been put in place to address this, which are bearing fruit.
- Outcomes in science and religious education are improving due to strong leadership and thoughtful curricula. Leaders are now undertaking work to ensure pupils make equally strong progress in other foundation subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils, which represent a sizeable cohort in the school, are making very good progress from their starting points. In many cases, they outperform their non-disadvantaged peers both within the school and nationally.
- Pupils who have SEND have historically made less progress than their peers. However, bespoke provision and targeted interventions, often around supporting their social and emotional needs, are helping more of them to make better progress.
- The most able pupils, who account for approximately a quarter of the school population, are not consistently making the progress they should. Leaders are aware of this and are making this group of pupils a high priority in lessons.

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

School leaders would welcome visiting schools with a strong track record of curriculum development in the foundation subjects.

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.