



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR SOLENT JUNIOR SCHOOL

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| Name of School: | Solent Junior School |
| Head of School: Executive Headteacher: | Laura Peterkin-Aldred Lucy Wilby |
| Hub: | Wootton Bassett |
| School phase: | Primary |
| MAT: | The De Curci Trust |

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| Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review: | Effective |
| Date of this Review: | 02/12/2024 |
| Overall Estimate at last QA Review: | Not applicable |
| Date of last QA Review: | 20/11/2023 |
| Grade at last Ofsted inspection: | Good |
| Date of last Ofsted inspection: | 10/03/2020 |



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Quality Assurance Review

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

Leadership at all levels Leading

Quality of provision and outcomes Effective

AND

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

Area of excellence Solent Positive Action Research Community (SPARC): developing an inclusive and context driven, positive action research learning culture to drive school improvement. Accredited.

**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

Solent Junior is a three-form entry junior school, situated to the north-east of the City of Portsmouth, with 362 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, however, the proportion of pupils from different ethnic groups is growing. The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is lower than the national average, although the number of pupils from service families is significantly higher than found nationally.

The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is similar to the national average; however the proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans (EHCPs) is increasing.

The school is closely aligned with the nearby infant school, sharing an executive headteacher. The head of school has been in post since 2019, having previously been in the same position at the infant school. Both schools are members of the De Curci Trust, which also includes the local secondary school.

At Solent Junior School, leaders' aim is that all children and staff learn and thrive within an environment of aspiration, equity and justice for all, through high challenge and low threat.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The passionate and ambitious senior leadership team share the school's vision and values. They are continuing the Solent Junior improvement journey, with a clear commitment to serving the community.
- After a period of some instability, leaders have thoughtfully developed and nurtured the staffing team, which has grown to be more stable and is making a difference. Approachable and skilled leaders at all levels promote well-being for all. Leaders respond to the ideas and concerns from the Staff Dropbox.
- Leaders ensure that the school is outward facing, with a strong moral compass, setting up opportunities for networking and significantly improving practice for families and schools in the Portsmouth area and beyond. This includes improving inclusive practice, support for the children of military families and identifying and supporting young carers.
- Leaders at all levels are cohesive, working highly cooperatively to improve outcomes. Middle leaders are discerning, joining and informing networks external to the school, researching best practice, trialling and implementing initiatives. Computing and digital leaders have an aspirational digital strategy, with a coherent curriculum offer from Reception to Year 6. This has been developed alongside infant school colleagues, so that the right child has the right tool for the right job at the right time.

- Personal development is exemplary. Pupils benefit from a happy, safe, warm and predictable environment where everyone thrives, flourishes and grows. This approach is underpinned by six core values, developed and shared across the whole school community: friendship, teamwork, respect, responsibility, perseverance and aspiration. The excellent Emotional Literacy Assistant (ELSA) informs and supports pupils, families and staff. Pupils use the pupil post box and conversations with trusted adults in their classroom and beyond. Leaders share 'you said we did' to show that their voice matters. This exemplary approach is shared in Portsmouth and more widely.
- The behaviour policy is based on developing pupils' understanding, communication and resilience, alongside staff empathy and skills. Parents and staff are more confident to understand and respond to behaviour. Initiatives include restorative conversations and 'Teach Peace' conflict negotiators. Behaviour incidents have reducing significantly.
- Eco Warrior representatives and Junior Road Safety Officers are passionate about their roles and responsibilities. Their ideas for large scale change start with school-wide issues, such as waste disposal and recycling. Road safety officers have politely and constructively engaged with delivery drivers and people who park without consideration near the school gates.
- Pupil councillors are proud and thoughtful advocates for their school. They eloquently described how the school values are real to them. They support school improvement, alongside governors and are aware of budgets and funding issues. In the summer term, senior pupils raised a significant amount of money from an entrepreneurial event, purchasing items for the school and donating funds to local charities. A pupil was clear that 'I think that having roles is really good, as this allows children to make changes and feel special.'
- The inspirational Makaton Choir with 103 members, convened by a senior midday assistant, performs at Portsmouth Football Club and Gunwharf Quays, sharing their message of inclusion and joy.

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

... leaders refined the use of attainment and progress information, to ensure that they fully utilise it when showcasing their school and taking the school to the next level.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Due to warm, nurturing relationships alongside high expectations, pupils feel safe to express themselves and give their best in learning.

- The Solent Positive Action Research Community (SPARC) initiative supports the continuous evolution of a well-developed curriculum. Pupils are well prepared to make their contributions to life outside school and after they leave.
- Pupils are supported by teachers and well trained Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) to rapidly catch up in phonics and spelling, using approaches based on 'Little Wandle.' Pupil 'Reading Ambassadors' give consistent and regular support to those pupils who initially struggle in reading.
- Pupils are passionate and engaged in discussing and sharing their views. In a lively debate about 'Street Child,' due to thoughtful questioning and the use of sentence stems, pupils used high level vocabulary. Pupils with additional needs were well supported to access and share their views. Pupils were able to disagree respectfully.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. In many lessons they are willing to have a go and learn from their mistakes in a safe learning space. In a Year 5 science lesson, a pupil's explanation was incorrect. Another pupil rephrased the explanation allowing the pupil to develop their understanding. In a Year 6 English, lesson pupils were encouraged by the teacher's 'give it a go you might be wrong you might be right' mantra.
- In mathematics, a mastery approach is embedded and highly effective. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge and pedagogy to visually model methods, including the use of manipulatives, alongside their reasoning. Pupils skilfully use a variety of methods to address problems including using manipulatives and visual representation. They readily explain and justify their methods and conclusions. Mathematics is valued by pupils. One pupil commented that 'maths is like doing art.'
- Displays and working walls are purposeful and well used. For example, in Year 5 mathematics classes, worked examples and pupils' current learning were clearly displayed and referred to by pupils.
- Pupils are encouraged to cooperate, discuss and celebrate their learning. In many lessons pupils are encouraged to move around or use practical apparatus. As a result there is a regular 'learning buzz' emanating from active learners. In a Year 5 science lesson pupils cooperated, shared ideas about friction, developing their scientific thinking.
- Teaching staff's skilful questioning challenges and extends pupils' learning. Teachers use cold calling and 'phone a friend'.

- Pupils use retrieval skills to build on previous learning. In a Year 3 history lesson, pupils overtly built on Year 2 learning, used their books to review the recent topic and completed a short quiz to assess knowledge retention. They actively engaged in groups, producing a chronology, sequencing pictures on a timeline, developing their oracy and justifying their choices.
- Pupils want to come to school. Attendance is a strong, above the national average, and persistent absence is low compared to local and national levels.
- A small but significant proportion of higher attaining pupils leave the school after Year 5 to attend local independent education. The trend of Key Stage 2 attainment is positive. In 2024, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was in line with the national average, with relatively greater strength in mathematics and writing.

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

... strong practice in questioning was further developed and shared to ensure consistent best practice across the school, to further improve standards.

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

- Pupils from one or more groups linked to SEND, social disadvantage and military families, often have vulnerabilities. These pupils felt well supported in a school where 'everyone is welcomed.' They appreciate that there is someone who cares and they know how to get support. They agreed that adults at Solent Junior believe that they (pupils) can be successful.
- Over a tenth of the school come from serving military families with specific recognised vulnerabilities. Pupil support includes one-to-one support, the 'military kids group,' trips with pupils from other schools and family events and celebrations. Solent Junior is the Festival of Friends hub school for North Portsmouth and has national links. Service families use their Teams page to communicate, receiving and sharing information.
- Pupils benefit from high quality environments, which are carefully designed to stimulate and support learning, promoting inclusion, with calmer spaces for pupils who may suffer from sensory overload. The ELSA room and sensory rooms are complemented by outdoor quiet and alternative spaces.

- Pupils with additional needs are well supported in classrooms. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, a pupil with a visual impairment used a laptop which mirrored the whiteboard presentation to support their learning.
- Leaders have identified and provide exemplary support for young carers, some of whom may not initially appear to meet the criteria. These pupils are linked to the Portsmouth Young Carers group. Pupils chose where they want to visit, often supported by staff in their free time. As a result, there has been a reduction in the need for ELSA support. This important work is shared with Portsmouth primary headteachers and could be shared more widely.
- LSAs make significant contributions to developing pupil passports for disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs. Leaders are developing the use of video recording of the experience from the pupils' perspective.
- Inclusion leads have a good understanding of pupils' emotional needs and how to plan and respond to them. The school ELSA first aid kit is well used to promote emotional well-being. This is being shared more widely within Portsmouth.
- Pupils from service families, disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs are generally making expected progress or better from their starting points. Their personal development and behaviour is exemplary.

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

... No even better if was identified.

5. Area of Excellence

Solent Positive Action Research Community (SPARC): developing an inclusive and context driven, positive action research learning culture to drive school improvement.

Accredited

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

In 2019, the educational research team from the University of Portsmouth facilitated a whole staff trust INSET day, providing the 'spark for SPARC.' Leaders understood that the school had the capacity, skills, and knowledge to lead context based action research within school, enabling them to develop a sustainable, low cost, high impact solution to develop staff at all levels, including non-teaching roles, to improve outcomes.

SPARC learning communities may be led and facilitated by practitioners at all levels. The SPARC cycle begins with a challenge and a driving question. This leads to research, reflection, plan, do, reflect/review/refine and finally share. Themes may interrelate and sometimes generate additional and parallel research streams.

The SPARC book club has played a significant role in developing the school-wide learning culture. The headteachers (Solent Infant and Junior School), introduced a regular session with a 'book of the moment,' linked to school improvement priorities. This generated discussion and reflection to feed strategic leadership and school improvement. A pivotal book 'When the Adults Change, Everything Changes' by Paul Dix, led to a reshaping of the school behaviour policy with significant impact for all stakeholders. Books are often used as ways to engage and focus staff on key issues. Book clubs are now happening and shaping practice across the school, including staff at all levels.

Staff at all levels are fully invested in school improvement and are developing as highly reflective practitioners. Professional development groups use current, reliable, research. Learning streams are sustainable and high profile. Weekly staff meetings, fortnightly LSA meetings and regular INSET days are research informed, developing staff competence and confidence. The structure and timescales of research enquiries can be extended or shortened, depending on findings and impact measures.

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

Internal and external monitoring has shown that the quality of education has improved. Academic and wider outcomes are improving over time, with a greater impact on pupils from vulnerable groups. The most significant impact that this professional learning culture has had on the school has been the development of the staff skills and pedagogy. The culture of investing in staff development has resulted in a highly engaged, motivated and competent staff .

The 2021/2022 learning environment research resulted in a learning environment where all pupils are better able to learn and make progress, both academically and in their mental health and wellbeing. The impact has moved beyond the school as the school was invited to work alongside the Portsmouth Neurodiversity Hub, which supports families in assessing and meeting the needs of their neurodiverse children. Pupils with vulnerabilities eloquently relate that they feel happy, safe and able to learn.

The 'Reach for the Stars' research strand was based on the question – 'How can we develop our provision, so that our learners have a greater sense of self-belief and self-worth?' The impact has been seen in many ways, including pupils who are more able to articulate what challenge looks like and how it feels to be challenged, and pupils who are more resilient. The proportion of pupils achieving greater depth has increased, especially in writing.

There are too many other impacts to celebrate in this report. However, pupils are benefiting from a school with a more coherent, streamlined curriculum where they can learn more and remember more and are better prepared for the next step in their learning journey.

Other important impacts include senior midday supervisors taking leading roles in making the outside play environment inclusive and safe, for pupils who find boisterous play challenging. The legendary Makaton choir evolved from the ethos of ownership and contribution from staff at all levels, to increase the amount of joy in the school day.

In 2024-2025, the SPARC theme, 'Equity and Justice for all through high challenge and low threat,' is being used to engage, motivate and drive staff development. The impact is clear and obvious.

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

Lucy Wilby
Executive Headteacher
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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.



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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>).