QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR BENCHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of School:	Benchill Primary School
Headteacher/Principal:	Steven Rooney
Hub:	Aspire
School phase:	Primary
MAT (if applicable):	N/A

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Effective
Date of this Review:	18/03/2026
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	Working towards Effective
Date of last QA Review:	17/03/2025
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Requires Improvement
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	26/11/2024

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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/or pupils with additional needs	Effective
Area of excellence	N/A
Previously accredited valid areas of excellence	N/A
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.

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1. Context and character of the school

Benchill Primary School is a three-form entry community school in Manchester, located in Wythenshawe. The school serves an area of significant socio-economic deprivation. It has approximately 500 pupils, over two-thirds of whom are classified as disadvantaged, which is well above the national average. The proportions of pupils receiving support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), as well as those who speak English as an additional language, are also above national figures.

The school has recently begun working in partnership with Challenge Partners through the Aspire Hub, strengthening its collaborative approach to school improvement.

A new headteacher was appointed in September 2024 and has since initiated a period of significant change, working closely with the leadership team. The school's values have been reviewed and are now centred around three key principles: Conquering Challenges, Succeeding Together, and Celebrating Difference.

Benchill Primary is also a United Nations Rights Respecting School, reflecting its commitment to inclusion and pupil voice.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The headteacher is a strong and skilful leader who is passionate about improving the life chances of the diverse community the school serves. Although having been in post for a relatively short time, he has galvanised leaders and staff and introduced a range of initiatives, for example a new phonics scheme, which has led to improved outcomes.
- The headteacher and his highly effective, tight-knit team work well collaboratively and their individual skills complement each other. The team's self-evaluation and improvement planning are accurate and sharply focused. As a result, leaders know their school and the next steps for improvement exceptionally well
- Leaders have implemented a comprehensive teaching and learning strategy which has been embraced by staff. It is built around the three principles of engage, build and consolidate, Consequently, teaching is increasingly consistent across the school.
- Leaders respond swiftly to feedback from monitoring and evaluation activities. For example, they have made effective changes to both the history and RE curriculum which are having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Subject leaders are well supported by senior leaders and through cluster group meetings and activities. As result, they are building their knowledge and confidence and playing a greater role in the evaluation of the curriculum and teaching and learning.

- Leaders are very mindful of staff wellbeing. The school is highly flexible around leave of absence and supports the personal circumstances of staff. All staff have access to private health care, including physiotherapy as well as counselling, through the Employee Assistance programme. Planning time can be taken at home and subject leads are given time to monitor and evaluate their curriculum areas. As a result, staff morale is high and turnover low.
- The school is beginning to share its skills and knowledge further afield. For example, the headteacher has advised another local primary school on how to develop and improve the history curriculum. That school has written to the headteacher to share that, as a result of this support, staff are now much more confident in delivering the history curriculum and that outcomes have improved.
- The school is a calm, purposeful and happy place where everyone's expectations are high, and pupils clearly enjoy coming to school. As a result, the climate for learning is excellent and attendance is improving towards the national average.

2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if…

… all middle leaders adopted a consistent approach and rigour to monitoring and evaluation.

… leaders planned more opportunities for pupils to celebrate different festivals linked to the different religions of the school's increasingly diverse community.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- The curriculum is broad, balanced and increasingly ambitious for all pupils, including disadvantaged and pupils with SEND. Most foundation subjects are delivered through high-quality booklets prepared by leaders. As one pupil said, "I like the way the text in the booklet makes it less complicated." Consequently, pupils are making better progress.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make a sound start to their learning because of high expectations and clear, established routines. Classrooms, for both Nursey and Reception, are well equipped and well organised, resulting in children enthusiastically and inquisitively accessing all areas of learning. In a Reception class, a child immediately asked who I was, before proudly telling me the name of the plastic fish he was playing with!
- The learning environment is vibrant and colourful and deliberately designed not to be overstimulating. Corridors are welcoming and informative. Alongside the celebration of pupils' work, there are displays which promote key British values such as democracy and the rule of law. These, alongside a strong and well-structured personal development programme, support pupils to prepare for life in modern Britian.

- Lessons are well structured with clear routines which pupils understand and respond to well. For example, when hearing the words “magnet eyes”, everyone’s attention immediately turns to the teacher.
- Teachers’ use of modelling is effective and sophisticated. This was clearly seen in a Year 1 reading lesson where the teacher skilfully supported the pupils to understand the success criteria by presenting them with examples of what success would not look like. For example, one pupil spoke about history, saying, “The teacher would not just give us the answer, they would model how to find the answer.”
- Just over a year ago, leaders introduced a new phonics scheme and ensured that all staff, including teaching assistants, were fully trained in order to deliver the small group work essential to pupils making good progress. To ensure staff skills remain consistent, there is regular update training from a consultant from the scheme. As result, pupils’ performance on the phonics check is improving.
- There is a strong focus on reading across the school. For example, in the foundation subjects there are many opportunities for pupils to read at length. Teachers use choral and echo reading effectively which strengthens pupils’ confidence. From Year 3 onwards, a new reading scheme was introduced last January, the impact of which was seen in the improvement in reading outcomes last summer.
- The school selects class texts carefully to ensure that they are engaging and cover a wide range of socially, cultural and personal development issues. For example Year 5 pupils study “You are awesome” by Matthew Syed, and in Year 4 “ Fantastic Women who saved the Planet” by Kate Pankhurst. In every classroom there are speedy word sheets to support pupils to quickly learn new and challenging words. Additionally, every classroom has its own reading corner.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive throughout the school which results in positive learning. Behaviour for learning is consistently strong across all classes. The recent introduction of the THRIVE programme supports those pupils struggling with self-regulation.
- The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as mixed football, art and sewing. Additionally, pupils experience visits such as to the Palace Theatre in Manchester and a children’s adventure farm. The school regularly brings visitors into the school to work with pupils. During the review The Royal Northern College of Music was running a workshop leading to a performance for parents. This provision ensures that pupils are developing their cultural capital well.

3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if…

… expectations of feedback from all staff were clear and consistent.
… all teachers provided appropriate adaptations to ensure that the more able pupils are suitably challenged to reach their full potential.

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

- The SENDCo, although quite new to the post, has a clear overview of what is working well and where improvements need to be made. She is part of the senior leadership team and feels well supported to drive forward this dimension of the school's work.
- The recent introduction of an inclusion team has increased capacity to monitor the progress and needs of vulnerable pupils, including those with SEND. This has resulted in more focused strategies and improved progress for these pupils. There is a range of support strategies in place to help emotionally vulnerable pupils, for example some wear a cuddly sloth on their back to help them feel more secure.
- The school has recently established a SEND unit which supports both their own pupils and pupils who join from other schools. The unit is a nurturing, inclusive environment where every pupil is valued, supported and empowered to achieve their full potential. The unit provides specialist provision for pupils with SEND, particularly those with autism, speech, language and communication needs and additional learning needs.
- Where practice is strong, teachers are skilled at making appropriate adaptations to support pupils with SEND to make good progress. In a Year 6 reading lesson based around the novel, "The Goldfish Boy", the teacher had simplified part of the text for the teaching assistant to support the pupil with whom he was working.
- The school works effectively with external professionals. For example, there is an educational psychologist and speech and language consultant who visit the school regularly to support those pupils struggling with a variety of challenges to overcome their specific barriers.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used to support pupils to have free access to all activities and trips to ensure that there are no barriers to them strengthening their cultural capital. For example, all pupils will soon be participating in a trip to Chester to deepen their understanding of Roman Britain and its legacy. As a result of the support given to disadvantaged pupils, they do better than their peers nationally, and last year the school received an official letter from the Department for Education commending them for achieving strong outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

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

- … all support staff were effectively deployed with a clear purpose to their role.
- … pupils' individual learning plans clearly identified strategies needed to enable pupils to make progress.
- … teachers consistently adapted lessons to meet the needs of pupils with SEND.

5. Area of Excellence

None applied for

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 partnership of schools and trusts 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 partnership 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)