



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR SOAR VALLEY COLLEGE

Name of School:	Soar Valley College
Headteacher/Principal:	Julie Robinson
Hub:	East Midland South
School phase:	Secondary
MAT (if applicable):	Aspire Learning Partnership

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	08/11/2023
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	Leading
Date of last QA Review	18/11/2022
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	07/11/2014

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 Leading

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 Extra-curricular provision and mathematics, 10/11/2014

Overall peer evaluation estimate Leading

The Quality Assurance Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades. The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is developmental not judgmental.

1. Context and character of the school

Soar Valley is a larger than average-sized secondary school, serving areas of high deprivation in Leicester. Housed in modern, purpose-built accommodation, it boasts excellent educational and sports facilities. The current principal has provided inspirational and principled leadership in this role since 2014, having previously served the college as vice principal.

The college has a higher-than-average proportion of students for whom English is an additional language and the majority of students are from an Indian heritage background. There is a higher-than-average number of students eligible for pupil premium funding at the college. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is close to the national average, although those with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) is below average.

The college is part of the Aspire Learning Partnership, a new multi academy trust with two academies. The motto of the college is 'Aspire, Enjoy, Achieve' where "every individual is encouraged and supported to do the best they can do and be the best they can be."

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Leaders, including governors and trust leaders, demonstrate a relentless aspiration for excellence. As a result, they are continuously looking for areas to improve. As the chair of the trust said, "we are always hunting for areas to develop".
- Leaders, at all levels, talk confidently about the vision and ethos of the college and how this is implemented in their own areas. The values of Aspire, Enjoy and Achieve are modelled by staff in all areas, resulting in positive behaviour and attitudes of students whilst in lessons.
- Middle leaders are extremely positive about the college and proud to be part of it. They are committed to supporting the college's strategic direction. For example, their team improvement plans are written to underpin the college improvement plan and there is clear coherence between them.
- All staff contribute to policy making, leading to staff feeling involved and empowered. As a consequence, there is a commitment to effective application of policies. The transition from a 'marking' to a 'feedback' policy led to more effective practise. This was because while the core values are seen across the school, the implementation has varied according to the individual pedagogical needs of the various subjects.

- All leaders are clear about how the pastoral curriculum should be implemented. It has become embedded in the culture of the school. The impact of this is that the curriculum is not only bespoke to meet the needs of the school, but also the needs of different year groups. Examples are the Year 8 Speaking Honestly to Understand Sexual Harassment (SHUSH) project and the active citizenship programmes run in Year 8 and Year 10.
- Leaders ensure that staff development is focussed on individual needs and college priorities. All developments are preceded with specific professional development for the staff, so that they are fully equipped to implement the programmes effectively. For example, the improved reading programmes involved training for staff to deliver this effectively and consistently.
- Curriculum leaders demonstrate a thorough knowledge and understanding of pedagogical issues and how to include all students in learning. They talk convincingly about the strategies they use. This includes the strategies used to implement disciplinary literacy within the college, and their role in developing those strategies.
- There is a commitment from leaders to collaborative working and support for other schools. The development of the Aspire Learning Partnership is a result of this commitment. The work that the college has done with the other college in the trust has raised standards significantly, including for disadvantaged students and those with additional needs.

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

...curriculum leaders, particularly of foundation subjects, found ways to value Key Stage 2 learning and the knowledge students acquire at this stage.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Leaders' commitment to providing students with the best possible education, qualifications and experience has resulted in a principled and ambitious curriculum. Positive progress measures, and extremely high rates of sustained further education or training post 16, demonstrate the success of this curriculum. In 2022 and 2023, progress at Key Stage 4 was significantly above national averages, including for disadvantaged students.
- The curriculum is carefully planned and sequenced, in all areas, so that the students develop a mastery of the essential knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, in Year 11 Science, the understanding of different

hydrocarbon homologous groups is built on a secure knowledge of valency, covalent bonding and chemical formulae.

- Teachers demonstrate excellent subject and subject pedagogical knowledge. As a result, students' questions are answered quickly, misconceptions are addressed, and students are encouraged to develop their responses fully. For example, in English, an initial response to a question was followed by probing questions to develop the answer and then a request for an appropriate quote to provide the "icing on the top".
- There is a strong focus on reading and vocabulary across the curriculum, through giving students well-selected reading related to the subject and explicit teaching of relevant vocabulary. As a result, students are able to use technical vocabulary well in their responses to questions, both written and oral. For example, explicit vocabulary teaching in Year 9 History, alongside a detailed relevant reading piece, produced exemplary responses from the students. In Art, Year 7 students could articulate their understanding using technical vocabulary and in music the students really enjoyed repeating the terminology in different ways taking pride in their recall.
- Students exhibit excellent attitudes to, and behaviours for, learning. As a result, they engage fully in the lessons and make excellent progress. For example, students in all modern foreign languages (MFL) lessons visited were very engaged in their learning. This was demonstrated through their participation in discussions which showed high levels of application.
- Homework is used effectively for consolidation and practice, which further strengthens learning. In MFL, students had completed a written task which was then assessed and used by the teacher to address misconceptions.
- The recently introduced feedback system is used effectively to ensure that students know how to improve their work. For example, in Year 10 English folders, a variety of resources are used to provide feedback, providing students with clear next steps. This enables the students to act on the feedback given and significantly improve their work.
- Extremely high levels of enthusiasm, passion and subject knowledge from teachers leads to engaging lessons and good engagement from the vast majority of students. For example, in a Year 9 religious education lesson the teacher involved the class in examples, demonstrating an enjoyment in learning for its own sake. The students reported that they in turn enjoyed the learning and enjoyed deepening their understanding of the subject material.
- Students are given skills for life and are therefore prepared for future studies and their next stage of education, employment or training. For example, in a library lesson, students in Year 8 were using the Dewey Decimal System to

find a book on 'European countries' and could select a book on a specific country to learn more about the language they are learning in MFL.

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

...whiteboards were always used as effectively as in the best lessons, and where they are the most appropriate tool to deliver the required learning.

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

- The development of reading, and support for weaker readers, is exceptionally well developed. The college analyses the precise barriers to a student's development of reading and then targets specific interventions. As a result, students make rapid progress in their reading and are enabled to access the curriculum. For example, students in Year 7 with phonic decoding deficiencies are taught through a phonics scheme, while those with comprehension or inference deficiencies are given specific support to meet their needs.
- There are many opportunities for disadvantaged students, and those with additional needs, to participate in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. Attendance at such provision is monitored, and students are targeted if they are not participating, to ensure that all students are involved in some way. As a result, the proportion of disadvantaged students, and those with additional needs, engaging with these opportunities is high.
- The information provided to teachers regarding students with additional needs is of high quality and easily accessed. As a result, teachers know their students exceptionally well. This enables them to effectively meet their needs. For example, a student in languages reported that his teacher sends him the work to access online, with a laptop provided by the school, as it would take him too long to write the information during the lessons.
- Support for students with additional needs is carefully planned. They are fully included in the curriculum that they share with their peers, including the higher prior attainers (HPA). Teaching to the highest level is evident, with strong scaffolding for the students with additional needs and/or disadvantage. As a result, HPA students are challenged, while those with additional needs and the disadvantaged are fully included. For example, in English, effective

scaffolding and targeted questioning ensured that the students with additional needs were supported allowing the teacher to extend the HPAs.

- The use of additional adults to support learning is highly effective. This ensures that students with additional needs participate effectively in all aspects of learning. For example, provision of specialist support in physical education lessons, means that students with physical disabilities are able to receive individual help and feedback. In a Year 7 football lesson, this ensured full access to the curriculum and also promoted self-esteem.

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

...learners with additional needs were provided with sufficient scaffolding to complete tasks in all lessons, as is the case in the majority of lessons.

5. Area of Excellence

N/A.

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 report content to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector each year.

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.

Schools can also attend Sharing Leading Practice (SLP) events where schools showcase excellent and/or innovative practice. Sharing Leading Practice events allow school leaders with specific improvement needs to visit a school or attend an online webinar hosted by a school, with outstanding provision in that area.

Both the School Support Directory and the Shared Leading Practice events 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>)