

Written Report

CHALLENGE PARTNERS: Quality Assurance Review Written Report

Name of School:	Highbury Primary School
School Address:	Dovercourt Road, Cosham PO6 2RZ
Hub School:	Mary Rose Portsmouth Hub

Telephone Number:	02392375404
Email address:	ssadler@highbury-prim.portsmouth.sch.uk

Unique Reference Number:	8512674
Local Authority:	Portsmouth
Type of School:	Primary
School Category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	1 - 11
Number on roll:	340 main school; 120 nursery
Head teacher/Principal:	Sarah Sadler

Date of last Ofsted inspection:	October 2012
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	2 Good

Date of Quality Assurance Review:	1 – 3 July 2015
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QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW – SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES

School Improvement Strategies:	Good
Achievement is:	Good
Quality of Teaching:	Good
Area of Excellent Practice:	
Early Years Foundation Stage:	Confirmed

Overall Review Evaluation

The Quality Assurance Review found indicators that Highbury Primary appears to be at the top of the Good grade as judged in the school's Ofsted report of October 2012 and is working towards Outstanding. The Nursery was very recently judged outstanding by Ofsted.

Information about the school

- Highbury is larger than the average primary school. Numbers fell in the past, but have now recovered up to Year 3. The popularity of Early Years provision is helping sustain numbers beginning main school.
- Pupils are mainly of White British origin.
- The proportion entitled to support from pupil premium funding is average, but showing some signs of increasing.
- The proportion with special educational needs is average
- A majority of pupils begin school with skills below age-related expectations.

School Improvement Strategies

What went well

- School improvement is firmly and successfully based on key priorities that have been and continue to be crucial to the development of the school: raising achievement in English and mathematics, inclusion and improving teaching and learning through coaching and action research.
- Talk for Writing builds on the emphasis on speaking and listening in Early Years. It is the core model for teaching and learning. It requires pupils to think, discuss, understand, explain and apply writing skills in a way that prepares them very well to succeed in the task set. They write about topics that engage their interest, often drawing on a store of experience from other areas of the curriculum. Training has led to a high degree of consistency in the approach, so pupils move from year to year improving their expertise within a familiar structure. Thorough monitoring through planning, scrutiny and learning walks has firmly embedded the approach in all classes. Writing outcomes have continuously improved over three years.
- Talk for Maths built on the success of this approach. Key leaders within each phase, including in Early Years where understanding of number needed to be boosted, attend a regular advanced skills course which takes the writing model as a basis for learning in maths. They in turn coach and plan with colleagues. This has embedded quickly for pupils and staff because of its similarity to the writing strategy. Again the emphasis on language has deepened and reinforced pupils' learning of key terms and skills. Again the approach is being consistently applied and achievement in maths is improving.
- Inclusion is a vital element in pupils' success at Highbury. It is very well managed across Early Years and main school by two coordinators who work closely together and both play an important role in the strategic development of the school. Inclusion is seen as extending to all pupils and any pattern of underachievement is picked up and responded to through progress meetings with teachers and assistants. There is a strong emphasis on teacher input, sometimes extending outside class involving

phase leaders in working with pupils. SENCos advise teachers on planning and track interventions, carefully finding effective and innovative ways of moving children on. Links with parents and outside agencies are extensive and very well managed.

- Teachers' readiness to follow the vision and ambition that senior leaders have for the school has seen willing participation in a coaching programme based on lesson observation and in action research, some of which has become the basis for master's level degree courses. Teachers base their research on understanding their pupils' learning needs. This brings the academic study into practical use in planning and delivering lessons that improve progress.
- The school is very effective at accessing external expertise to support the development of improvement strategies

Even better if...

.....the SEF made a very clear statement about how important teachers' commitment to coaching and research has been to the development of consistent approaches to improving the school.

Pupil Achievement

- Achievement at Highbury Primary follows a rising trend; from Early Years, through KS1 and into KS2. Data shows that most children enter the nursery below age-related expectations, but the early years provision ensures accelerated progress is made. Children get off to a flying start in the nursery setting which was very recently judged outstanding by Ofsted. The proportion reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception classes is securely well above the national level.
- The success story for younger pupils continues by the end of Year 2 where attainment that was significantly below national in the past has been transformed to be consistently above national in all subjects. 2015 KS1 data suggests that attainment will be significantly above national averages. Proportions achieving L2+, L2b+ and L3+ for reading, writing and maths are well above the 2014 national average. Disadvantaged pupils at this stage have almost closed the gap on other pupils nationally except in maths where they were a term behind in 2014, but closer in confirmed 2015 results. Pupils with special needs also performed strongly in this key stage.
- The review took place shortly before confirmation of 2015 results. The school is confident that the steady trend of improvement will be sustained. Teacher assessments for KS2 suggest that on the whole, children have improved on 2014 and achieved at least in line with the national average across reading, writing, maths and SPaG. The gap between vulnerable pupils and their peers has closed further and this should reflect a narrowing of the gap from others nationally. Progress may exceed national in all three subjects. Maths results which had been weaker than other subjects anticipate improved progress.

Quality of teaching

What went well

- A passion and love of learning is tangible and shared by both the staff and children; hence energy, fun and engagement are consistent hallmarks of learning across the school. The school has created a vibrant, broad-based curriculum which is structured around quality texts and provides pupils with the opportunity to explore new learning themes each term.
- Language is consistently given high emphasis in lessons to compensate for the limited vocabulary that many children arrive with. Talking with each other and writing explanations enables pupils to deepen their understanding.
- Staff deliberately allow thinking time and partner talk to ensure that pupils can really take part in answering probing questions.
- 'Washing lines' display key reminders to support pupils' learning, work is given a real life context that draws pupils in.
- Simply using a gesture code associated with a key concept sometimes prompts pupils to think for themselves.
- Often writing is linked to another area of study so that pupils can draw on a bank of knowledge they already have.
- The work the school does to promote personal development (SMSC) transfers into learning and pupils are consistently enthusiastic to engage and give of their best.
- Linking learning to real life contexts helps pupils to understand the application and relevance of their learning.
- Pupils know what is expected in a task because they have 'tool kit' lists to help them.
- Teachers have a very good awareness of groups and individuals and support them well. Teaching assistants play an active role.
- The consistency of approach that pervades lessons ensures that pupils become familiar with the structure of learning and confident about engaging in tasks.

Even better if...

...teachers were more often confident to allow high ability learners to undertake tasks or independently discuss them when they need less time than others to follow introductory modelling.

...teachers and teaching assistants deployed even more often the probing questioning techniques seen in the best lessons. This could sometimes be in a context of reflecting on and drawing together the learning.

...feedback marking in maths more consistently reflected some very good practice seen.

Quality of Area of Excellent Practice

The review team confirms EYFS, including both Nursery and Reception classes as an area of excellent practice. The judgement is based on the high quality evaluation by the school

using the Challenge Partner report form; a learning walk observing provision in all classes for children aged 1-5; EYFS learning observations of high quality learning; pupil progress data. A clear presentation by the Nursery Manager and EYFS Phase Leader demonstrated how well planned the strategic development of the setting has been.

The nursery was confirmed as outstanding by Ofsted in June. The link with Reception is seamless and practice is jointly developed and quality equally maintained. Good level of development is consistently well above national by the end of Reception, representing outstanding progress for children who come in below expectation. A rich curriculum and thorough tracking with opportunities for parents to be involved is evident in learning journey documentation. Planning, resources and opportunities for free-flow learning are all of high quality. Younger classes in the nursery engage in stimulating and well planned activities well balanced with care for their welfare. Opportunities for staff to develop their expertise across the age range are well structured. The specialist SENCo appointment ensures very close attention to special needs. Transition arrangements to Year 1 and continuity of effective teaching practices is very well managed.

Partnerships

Highbury Primary is involved in many partnerships that support both pupils and staff at the school. A strong link to the local teaching school has enabled staff to benefit from the pathways to carry out in-school research, which has in turn impacted on school pedagogy. Becoming an active member of Challenge Partners has had a great impact on the school, with the coaching model being implemented with great success as well as participation in the 'closing the gap' project, which is particularly relevant at this school. Links with Chichester University have enabled several members of staff to enhance their own learning to MA level, which has also impacted on whole school policy and practice in the classroom. Local links with cluster schools have ensured that rigorous moderation is able to take place for each year group to ensure clarity and consistency across the locality. These cluster links will be enhanced further next year, to included meetings and collaboration between subject leaders. Working relationships with Highbury College and the Diocese have provided opportunities for ICT support, curriculum enrichment and SMSC training.

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.

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

The school is currently engaging in Challenge the Gap and in a research group with Challenge Partner schools.