

Name of School:	Samuel Rhodes School
Head teacher/Principal:	Julie Keylock
Hub:	London Special and AP Hub
School type:	Special
MAT (if applicable):	N/A

Estimate at this QA Review:	Outstanding
Date of this Review:	15/01/2018
Estimate at last QA Review	Good
Date of last QA Review	09/11/2016
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	07/03/2017

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 Students	OUTSTANDING
Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment	OUTSTANDING
Area of Excellence	Not submitted
Overall Estimate	OUTSTANDING

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. Information about the school

- This 5 -19 special school occupies two sites. The secondary and sixth form students are in purpose-built accommodation. Primary students are in a building that presents access difficulties.
- Students admitted to the school are designated as having moderate learning difficulties (MLD). They have a range of additional needs and conditions that the school considers more challenging difficulties in some cases.
- There is a high adult to student ratio.
- Approximately two thirds of students are disadvantaged which is well above the national average.
- The school plays a leading role in school improvement and inclusion through outreach across the borough.

2.1 School Improvement Strategies - Follow up from previous review

- Self-evaluation and development planning are accurate, crisp and relevant. The school has moved rapidly to comply with assessment recommendations in the Rochford Review. All students have Education, Health and Care Plans (ECHPs) that have been revised and completed. Progress tracking systems are consistently applied. Ambitious, yet appropriate targets are set for all students. The wide range of students' needs are met and high quality teaching is adapted to need. The previous review commented on the imminence of an inspection. Leaders were well prepared for their latest inspection as the outcome suggests.

2.2 School Improvement Strategies - What went well

- The school worked hard to merit its recent Ofsted judgement of outstanding. Rather than stand still, leaders and staff have asked, 'What can we do even better?' During this visit, reviewers found some things at an early stage of development. However, the core strengths and values of Samuel Rhodes are firmly in place. Staff are dedicated and tireless and their dynamic determination promises further success.
- The senior leadership team collaborates very well. All senior leaders fulfil their roles and understand and support the wider picture. The link between primary and secondary is firm. Leaders all model their '24/7' availability for students and fellow staff. The team is expanding leadership roles to middle level colleagues due to thoughtful succession planning.
- Close collaboration and understanding between the primary and secondary phases is secured through an exchange of staff. Senior leaders interchange between the two phases for substantial periods of service. This ensures that leadership is continually 'refreshed'.
- The principal has set about deliberately distributing leadership and delegating authority. This has been accompanied by regular line management discussion which provides not only support but also accountability.
- The drive for further improvement is supported by a clear school development

plan (SDP). The SDP is already in its seventh iteration since last April, reflecting the constant review and evaluation. The format of the plan is clear and helpful because of a deputy headteacher's research during her National Professional Qualification in Headship. This focused on the use of qualitative evidence alongside quantitative indicators.

- Success is clear in the four 'new' priorities. Class teachers' assessments have become more precise and personalised. Staff teach appropriately to address the increasing range of students' needs that emerge from personalised assessment. EHCPs meet the Rochford review recommendations, are 'education-led' and feature prominently in teaching and learning. Well-organised continuous professional development has supported all priorities.
- Liaison between external professional services and in-house staff has been enhanced by the improved knowledge of students' needs and progress.
- The school is renowned for its outreach work in the borough and beyond. It has published, in collaboration with the local authority, a helpful guide for mainstream schools on 'Effective Inclusion.'
- The school is receptive to external ideas. In the primary phase, a system seen in a Challenge Partners review of a mainstream primary is in effective operation. 'Get it Right Gangs' are described in the teaching and learning section of this report.

2.3 School Improvement Strategies - Even better if...

...improved assessment data in class was recorded for analysis on improved IT software.

3.1 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Follow up from previous review

- The personalised approach to learning is very well represented by the application and development of assessment and of emotional intelligence.

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

- The teaching of reading through secondary phonics at Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 is effective in developing students' reading skills. Students enjoy mathematics.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They confidently guide their students through challenging, yet appropriate, material and facilitate their learning. Learning support assistants not only support in class, but also lead sessions while teachers work with individuals or reduced numbers in groups.
- Positive, effective relationships exist between teachers and students and between students and their peers. Teachers and learning support assistants use various methods to communicate with students. All members of staff use signing effectively to communicate with students. As a result, students are clear about their next learning steps and what they need to do to achieve their learning objectives.

- Through a pilot project, the ability to self-regulate is being enhanced through emotional intelligence or literacy, targeting self-awareness, motivation, empathy and social skills. This approach is planned to support improved social skills and self-regulation at home.
- Students have opportunities to explore a wide variety of texts, such as 'Project X' novels. The study of Macbeth led to an ambitious public performance featuring speech, music and dance.
- There is a palpable sense of enjoyment and fun in the lessons. One student in a food technology lesson sampled the smoothie she had made earlier and enjoyed the fun.
- In the primary phase, reviewers saw some excellent work that helped students get in the right mood for learning. They were placed in groups to get them going, affect their sensory needs positively or get them 'chilled out'. For instance, one group raced up and down the hall in various bodily positions to compete for gold, silver or bronze against two learning support assistants. In another room, yoga promoted relaxation. Students were listening to and feeling their bodies, following an adult's hypnotically calm instructions.
- Teachers and learning support assistants know their students well and are sensitive to their needs, clearly identifying potential barriers to learning almost as soon as the student enters the school. This helps support the students in regulating their own behaviour.
- There is a strong emphasis on student voice throughout the school. Students confidently express their opinions and are listened to sympathetically by staff in lessons, in social time and in school council meetings. Students represent their constituents and take minutes.
- Boundaries and high expectations for students' behaviour at school are clearly set. Students rise to these expectations. When, occasionally, an individual student struggles, help is immediately to hand.
- Strong, effective partnerships with local schools and colleges result in highly effective provision which enables students to be included in other educational settings and work experience opportunities. The school is proud of how well students conduct themselves on external visits.

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

...the system of marking to improve progress were to reflect best practice consistently.

4. Outcomes for Students

- A very high proportion of students make better than expected progress from very low starting points. To ensure that assessment is even more challenging for those students capable of even more rapid progress, a new 'flightpaths' system has been introduced in September 2017. Students can step up to a higher flightpath with even more aspiration, if their current progress justifies it.
- Applying the principle of 'stage not age' means that students can operate in a

band across year groups, or even phase, with some older students with delayed development. This means that all students are in a context in which they can achieve their potential.

- There is a strong track record of gaining worthwhile qualifications that help students make their way in the world. Recently, some students have begun a 'Step up to English' course that may lead to entry for GCSE English.
- The most startling progress is made in literacy, applying an externally developed system (RML). As teachers and learning support assistants have developed expertise through practice and progress by students shows exponential growth. Many students read appropriate texts fluently. They form letters well and spell accurately. One secondary class discussed the differences in spelling, pronunciation and meaning between *suspicious* and *superstitious*.
- In the secondary phase, there are a few subjects, one of which is mathematics, in which progress is not sufficiently rapid. Appropriate action to improve progress is in hand. Students make excellent progress in all subjects.
- When a student is making less than expected progress in any subject, well-planned interventions are implemented with good results.
- The ability to form relationships is a core strength of the school and a crucial outcome for students who could face prejudice in society. An assistant head is consulting on and developing a scale pertinent to the development of emotional intelligence. This is so that this aspect of outcomes can be tracked and measured.
- Strong relationships and high expectations mean that students are learning in social time, as well as in lessons. Consequently, standards of speaking and listening are high. One student serves on the Borough Youth Council.
- Internally, there are no significant differences between different groups in terms of outcomes. Boys and girls make similar progress. The progress of disadvantaged students closely matches their peers overall.
- Students in the sixth form are on track to meet ambitious targets in appropriate courses. The school is justifiably proud of a long track record of no NEETS; students who do not stay on at school enter appropriate further education provision.

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

The school is already investigating another Challenge Partners school's IT-based systems to record assessments. Further recommendations may be of interest.

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.