

Name of School:	St Christopher's Academy
Head teacher/Principal:	Pam Jones
Hub:	Three Shires
School type:	Primary
MAT (if applicable):	Bedfordshire East School Trust

Estimate at this QA Review:	Good
Date of this Review:	20/11/2017
Estimate at last QA Review	Good
Date of last QA Review	16/11/2015
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	09/02/2016

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 Pupils	Good
Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment	Good
Area of Excellence	Not submitted for this review.
Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence	None recorded.
Overall Estimate	Good

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

- St. Christopher's Academy is an average sized, two-form entry primary school situated between Dunstable and Luton. Pupils come to the school from both towns. The area the school is situated in is of low social deprivation although this profile is changing. Overall, there are more boys in the school than girls.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the school is below the national average but this figure is increasing.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is increasing, as is the proportion for whom English is an additional language. These figures are both just above the national average. White British pupils form almost half the number on roll.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below the national average. Over the last three years, the school has had no pupils who were statemented for special educational needs and/or disabilities. Similarly, there were no pupils with an education health care plan.
- The school became a member of the Bedfordshire East School Trust in September 2017.

2.1 School Improvement Strategies - Follow up from previous review

- The school joined the Bedfordshire East School Trust in September 2017. It was the first primary school in the Trust and this has led to improved links with other schools. The distributed leadership model has increased accountability and encouraged succession planning in the school. The national professional qualification for middle leadership (NPQML) and specialist leaders of education (SLE) awards have been gained by some members of staff, adding to the expertise within the staff body. The initiation of working parties with a defined brief has enabled a strict focus on various issues that have led to improvements.

2.2 School Improvement Strategies - What went well

- A very experienced headteacher and her dedicated leadership team skilfully lead the school. They form a cohesive unit with a clear, shared vision of providing the best possible outcomes for their pupils. They are uncompromising in their mission to drive up standards.
- The school's self evaluation form (SEF) is honest and accurate. Priorities are well established, based on the school's needs, and the SEF links well with the school development plan. The latter document provides direction, leading to improved performance.
- Working parties have responsibility for leading developments in various aspects of school, for example in the foundation subjects or focusing on more able pupils. These groups are in the early stages but are beginning to have a positive effect.
- Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) receive a bespoke induction programme and

external continuing professional development (CPD) so that they are quickly made aware of school expectations, although they understand the network of support available to them. Performance is 'RAG-rated' so that leaders can monitor teaching and learning effectively and establish support where it is needed.

- Leaders have a clear ethos of raising expectations for all. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress because strategies have led to high levels of quality-first teaching and appropriate support. This is a prerequisite in the classroom and has resulted in differences diminishing.
- The strategies that have brought year-on-year improvement in the development of phonics have largely been based on the headteacher's expertise in this aspect. Very close monitoring and sensitive grouping have become the keys to success.
- Eight pedagogical strategies have been introduced, which have been very successful in improving progress in mathematics. Accelerated Reader has boosted this area and has captivated boys and developed their interest in reading.
- CPD has led to improvements in mathematics and a dynamic, newly-appointed subject leader has brought greater impact.
- In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of EAL pupils joining the school. These pupils are immersed in a language rich environment with high expectations of them. Leaders have established a 'buddy system' to provide peer support for these pupils and staff have received CPD on teaching approaches for EAL pupils. This has enabled these pupils to make good progress.
- The 'values system' has been very successful in pupil development. It is not a separate system but an ethos of caring and responsibility that pervades all aspects of the school. Pupils were observed exhibiting these values in class and around the school.
- The school has received the Investors in Pupils Award, which has ensured a great opportunity for pupil voice. Staff and pupils have embraced this initiative fully and pupils are quick to bring forward suggestions to the leadership team.

2.3 School Improvement Strategies - Even better if...

...leaders investigated methods of presenting data in a more concise way.

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

- It has been two years since the last Challenge Partners review and the leadership team has actioned all the EBIs since then. The marking and feedback policy is regularly reviewed and all new teachers are coached on its implementation. A new handwriting scheme has been introduced and this has brought about improvements. The impact of the development of mathematics can be viewed in the improved outcomes in this subject.

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

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning observed in the school was

- consistently strong, particularly so in upper Key Stage 2.
- Teachers plan and deliver lessons that have clear structures which aid learning and lead to positive progress. Classroom routines are well established so that movement around the room and transitions from one stage of the lesson to another are smoothly executed.
 - Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and, in the best instances, they pose challenging questions to stretch pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils enthusiastically share their learning with their peers and adults in the room. They use subject specific vocabulary routinely and confidently.
 - Pupils are extremely well behaved and their attitudes to learning are very positive. The atmosphere in classrooms is one of mutual respect. Pupils and other adults support each other well, creating harmonious relationships. Pupils enjoy coming to school, one pupil commented; 'everybody in school is really happy – we always help each other'.
 - Pupils listen well to instructions and are then confident to begin their learning independently. They have strategies to help them if they get stuck and the plentiful resources in the classroom assist them in overcoming difficulties.
 - Tasks are generally well differentiated and challenge pupils appropriately.
 - Many teachers are keen to involve pupils in teaching others. This was observed in two mathematics lessons, where pupils were asked to come to the front to teach the class how to work out measuring the perimeter of compound shapes. One teacher challenged them by placing them in the role of 'The Convincer' to ensure they explained their working in such depth as to 'convince' the class they were right.
 - Learning support assistants play a vital role in the classroom. Teachers deploy them effectively to support learning, both in the classroom, and when taking small groups out to provide more focused support.
 - Pupil progress meetings are held frequently to ensure pupils who may be falling behind are clearly identified and the appropriate support can be initiated.
 - The nursery is led by a caring leader. Children are nurtured and guided effectively, building their independence and vocabulary. Other adults provide support to enable the children to gain a positive start to their journey through the school.

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

- ...there was a wider focus on modelling in the classroom so that pupils had clearer guidance to begin their learning or to clarify any misconceptions.
- ...teachers followed the good examples in upper Key Stage 2 of providing increased challenge for all pupils, especially for the most able through deeper, probing questioning.

4. Outcomes for Pupils

- In recent years, pupils have entered St Christopher's Academy with ability levels at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) that were above the national average. With the changing demographic of the school, this figure is now broadly average.
- In EYFS, pupils made strong progress, with a high percentage exceeding the national average for a good level of development in 2017. A three-year upward trend in the percentage passing the phonics screening test in Year 1 continued into 2017, with a high attainment rate of 90%.
- At the end of Key Stage 1, the percentage of pupils who met the expected standard in 2017 was above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Similarly, the national average was exceeded at the higher standard in all three areas.
- Progress at Key Stage 2 in 2017 was in line with, or above national averages in reading writing and mathematics. Leaders are particularly proud of improvements in mathematics, following a concentrated focus on this subject.
- Attainment in Key Stage 2 in 2017 was mixed. Figures for reading and writing were just below the national average although mathematics was above, again reflecting the hard work that has been undertaken in this subject. Following the pattern set in 2016, the school met or exceeded its targets in all areas in 2017. Attainment in science was above the national measure. Performance in the spelling, punctuation and grammar test in 2017 was not as strong and this is now a direct target for improvement. Teaching has been more focused on this aspect and improvements are now being seen.
- Disadvantaged pupils in the school made or exceeded expected progress in all areas in 2017, which was in line for all pupils nationally.
- The SLT is now focused on driving up standards by raising expectations. To achieve this, the school is now adopting the more aspirational FFT20 data targets.

5. Area of Excellence

Not submitted for this review.

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

The school has close involvement with the Three Shires hub so support is appropriate at the moment.

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.

