Name of School:	Gillingham School
Headteacher/Principal:	Paul Nicholson
Hub:	Wootton Bassett
School phase:	Secondary
MAT (if applicable):	Not applicable

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Not applicable
Date of this Review:	07/02/2024
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Effective
Date of last QA Review	20/06/2022
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	10/05/2023

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   Not applicable

Quality of provision and outcomes   Not applicable

AND

Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs

Area of excellence   Not applicable

Previously accredited valid areas of excellence   Not applicable

Overall peer evaluation estimate   Not applicable

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

Gillingham School is a large voluntary controlled school with over 1700 on roll, including over 350 in the sixth form. The school is located in a rural setting, the beautiful Blackmore Vale, in North Dorset. It was founded by benefactors in 1516 and educates pupils from the town of Gillingham and surrounding villages as well as others from further afield in Dorset, Wiltshire and Somerset. The school has over 30 feeder primary schools.

The profile of the school community has changed significantly in recent times. Currently just under a quarter of students are disadvantaged. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below average, although an average percentage have education, care and health plans (EHCP) in the main school and above average percentage in the sixth form. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage. Relatively few students have English as an additional language (EAL), but the numbers are increasing.

The school's values, which are present in every classroom, relate to ambition, kindness, dignity, that learning should be never disrupted and that students have the right to be safe and happy.

The review focused on the following subjects: design and technology (product design, electronics, textiles and food); modern foreign languages; media and history in all key stages.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Gillingham School's values permeate everything the school does. They inform the tutor programme, assemblies, the personal, social and relationships education (PSRE) curriculum, school council, and all discussions relating to behaviour. Key Stage 4 students recalled the values and one commented that 'Everything links back to the three values'. In the recent school survey, 92% of students agreed they feel safe in school, which is one of the values.
- The school leaders, under the focused and empowering leadership of the headteacher, work very effectively as a cohesive team. They each have responsibility across both pastoral and curriculum departments, which enables them to have a strong whole-school understanding. All leaders are involved in quality assurance and data analysis within their areas.

- The middle leaders— subject and year group leaders— demonstrate a commitment to the school and an enthusiasm for their roles. They make a significant contribution to the continuing improvement of the school. They oversee the work of colleagues in their departments through regular learning walks, for example, and are instrumental in driving improvements and initiatives, such as a new curriculum and assessment schemes in languages.
- Middle leaders enjoy the autonomy they are given but also benefit from regular opportunities to meet with their line managers. They appreciate the 'quad' system where different departments work together and share best practice, for example, in using visualisers. They have also found that the inquiry questions (IQ) help them to focus on a small number of priorities for the year. For example, an IQ in the languages department about the achievement of higher ability students has resulted in them becoming more ambitious due to strategies such as mentoring by sixth formers.
- There is a collegiate and supportive culture in Gillingham. The well-being of students and staff is given a high priority. Staff feel valued and well supported by senior leaders. They clearly enjoy working at Gillingham, as evidenced by how long many of them have been at the school. The students were also very positive about the school and said they particularly enjoyed the clubs and trips.
- The leadership team has worked effectively to improve the reading culture across the school. For example, 'Reading Trails', promoted by the librarians, have encouraged students to read more widely. The focus on reading fluency through 'Reading Plus' in Years 7 and 8 has allowed students to access the curriculum more confidently. Students involved have improved their reading ages by over three years in a year.
- Leaders make excellent use of data to forensically analyse all aspects of outcomes. This enables them to identify what needs to improve and, for example, to demonstrate the clear link between students' attendance and results, leading to the deliberate targeting of students through the 'Moveables Project'.
- Students are given a wide range of leadership opportunities. Staff respond to the views of the student council, which involves students from all year groups. Sixth formers act as role models to the younger students, for example, running clubs, acting as 'red coats', library assistants, and mentoring younger students. The sixth form council led assemblies on anti-bullying as part of the 'no more banter' campaign. Year 11 students mentor vulnerable younger students in the library, to improve their sense of belonging.

- A strong sports leaders programme runs from Year 9 with students supporting local primary schools as well as events in school. A Key Stage 3 library committee, supported by sixth formers, runs charity events promoting reading.
- Leaders have been successful in promoting the importance of the protected characteristics and teaching these in assemblies and lessons. They have decolonised the curriculum and introduced many approaches to celebrate different cultures and diversity.
- Students benefit from a broad and ambitious curriculum with a very high proportion of students studying EBacc subjects. They also experience a wide range of educational trips and extra-curricular clubs including sport, music and drama, which are rated highly by students. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged students have access to the clubs and trips, including one to a beach that was exclusively for them.

2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if…

…leaders ensured that there was greater consistency in assessment for learning, drawing on the strong practice that exists in some departments.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- The curricula in all areas are well sequenced, carefully considered and planned. This ensures that, for example, students write with increasing confidence and skills in languages and develop appropriate subject-specific skills in design and technology.
- Teachers demonstrate strong, secure subject knowledge, which enables them to teach with confidence and clarity. This motivates students and, for example, in Year 8 history, the teacher's extensive and relevant expertise brought the subject to life. She created a sense of engagement and interest that resulted in students wanting to find out more, for example, about the football match between World War 1 soldiers at Christmas.
- Questioning is often used very effectively by teachers. The best questioning draws out sophisticated answers from students, who are expected to use subject specific language, and increases the level of challenge within lessons. For example, in Years 10 and 11 history, teachers kept probing students until they answered in full, with the required key words and vocabulary.

- Teachers have established clear and consistent routines for lessons, such as greeting students at the door. Students settle quickly to work on retrieval activities at the start of lessons. Relationships with staff are purposeful and warm so that students are comfortable about answering and asking questions. Students behave well, appear keen to learn and are proud of their work, as seen, for example, in Year 10 design and technology, where students worked collaboratively to develop ideas.
- Some teachers make effective use of adaptive teaching, which ensures that students of different abilities can access the curriculum. In Year 9 product design, the teacher's adaptive approach was evident in the use of modelling to demonstrate how to create a new joint for their project.
- When students are asked to reflect on their work, they respond positively and are able to articulate what they need to do to improve. For example, the use of dedicated improvement and reflection time (DIRT) is completed regularly by students in mathematics and is increasingly impactful in English.
- In French, students' books clearly show progress in the sophistication of their work, with a high level of challenge as there is a significant amount of extended writing. Feedback is regular, with clear targets so students know exactly what they need to do to improve. In Year 9 French, effective use of mini whiteboards enabled the teacher to check for understanding and identify misconceptions.
- The use of a visualiser in Year 9 media allowed the teacher to model effective reading strategies to demonstrate how to summarise and synthesise more complex theoretical texts. Tier 3 language was highlighted and acronyms created that helped to support students' longer-term recall.
- Teachers' feedback in Year 8 history had a clear focus on tier 2 and 3 vocabulary. This supported and enhanced students' use of subject-specific language and accuracy in spelling, such as of 'patriotism' and 'comradeship'.
- All teachers have clear expectations for the presentation and organisation of work in books. Students are proud of their work and the presentation is nearly always very good.
- In Year 12 product design, presentation in folders was of a high standard. Students were keen to talk about their designs. One student explained that he had shared his ideas with an employer at an apprenticeship fair, possibly leading to a job opportunity.

- Leaders have made improving attendance a high priority. They have introduced a range of strategies to raise awareness of the importance of good attendance. For example, each year group has an assistant head of year with a focus on attendance, who analyses and shares data with the students; this was evident in a Year 9 assembly. Awards are given for 100% attendance. The 'Moveables' initiative, which involves tutors focusing on two chosen students, often those who are disadvantaged, is helping to raise the profile of attendance. In addition, the Bridge initiative, which is run by pastoral managers, attempts to remove barriers for disengaged parents and students to further improve attendance.

3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if…

…the curriculum allowed for more opportunities for effective DIRT, so that students better understand what they need to do, to improve and to create more consistency across the school.
…the implementation of the curriculum was more ambitious in some areas for higher ability students and included more opportunities to stretch and challenge them.
…teachers' questioning included more systematic checks to allow staff to know whose understanding is not yet secure.

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

- Gillingham is an inclusive school where a high priority is given to meeting the needs of disadvantaged students and those with SEND. The leaders have worked hard to close gaps for these students with some success.
- The school makes sure that it looks after individuals' different needs well. For example, leaders have established a 'graduation group' to support pupils in Year 7 and 8 who were well below age related expectations at the end of Year 6. Many of these pupils are disadvantaged. They are taught together as a small group for some subjects, such as English, geography and history, and most transition into the main school by Year 8. There was a very purposeful and effective climate for learning in a 'graduation group' lesson, with students demonstrating very positive attitudes; they were keen to contribute and were all engaged in the lesson.

- The SEND coordinator thoroughly tracks the progress of students with SEND, including those with EHCPs or who are in the 'graduation' group. The structure in the SEND department ensures that students are effectively supported at significant points of transition, for example, from Key Stage 4 to 5. This has been particularly effective in supporting students progressing on to post-16 study who may not be best suited to Level 3 qualifications.
- The school has also developed a very effective transition project into Year 7 which involves primary school pupils spending time in Gillingham on six afternoons. This enables staff to get to know them and helps pupils settle into Year 7 more easily.
- The school's relational approach to behaviour involves making reasonable adjustments to meet the sensory needs of some students. For example, the use of noise-cancelling headphones helped to make a student with autism feel more comfortable and able to learn.
- Where appropriate, a bespoke curriculum is created for individual students, utilising a mixture of school-based and external alternative provision (AP). In the SEND coordinator's meetings with pastoral teams, decisions are made about which students can benefit most from AP. The use of six week courses such as art therapy, gardening, mountain biking and the provision at Rylands Farm, help students to attend more regularly.
- The new resource base provides effective support for pupils with complex needs. For example, some pupils who were previously not accessing education are now engaging in a well organised bespoke programme.
- The regular use of 'live lessons' and 'Teams' within the Independent Learning Suite helps pupils with SEND to feel involved in their lessons and also to enjoy a broad curriculum.
- A high level teaching assistant makes regular assessments of students' progress during interventions. She works closely with teaching staff to provide accurate feedback on the specific areas where the pupil has made progress. As a result, teaching can be closely matched to the student's learning needs.

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

…the school identified more strategies to help students make up for 'lost learning' caused by low attendance.

5. Area of Excellence

Not applicable

<u>Following the QA Review</u>

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).