



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR KNOWSLEY LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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| Name of School: | Knowsley Lane Primary School |
| Headteacher/Principal: | Linda Lord |
| Hub: | Aspire |
| School type: | Primary |
| MAT (if applicable): | Vantage Academy Trust |

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| Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review: | Effective |
| Date of this Review: | 09/03/2020 |
| Overall Estimate at last QA Review (if applicable) | This is the school's first review. |
| Date of last QA Review (if applicable) | N/A |
| Grade at last Ofsted inspection: | Outstanding |
| Date of last Ofsted inspection: | 17/01/2019 |

1. Context and character of the school

Knowsley Lane Primary School is an averaged sized, one-form entry primary school, serving a predominantly White British population in one of the highest areas of deprivation in Knowsley. There are many challenges within the community that the school addresses successfully.

The proportion of ethnic minority groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are below the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is significantly above the national average, making up over three quarters of the population. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below the national average.

The trust provides a wealth of valuable support for groups at all levels. Trust-wide INSET days provide networking opportunities, such as outstanding subject leadership events. Other leaders have completed their NPQSL qualification. In the absence of the SENDco, the SEND trust hub is supporting the school.

The executive principal is a trained pupil premium reviewer. She is the representative on the Strategic Education Partnership Board for academies in Knowsley. The deputy principal has achieved the NPQH and supports other schools with Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 1 provision. The school is outward facing. Last week, leaders showcased their curriculum to eighteen Dutch leaders. Other staff have completed or are undertaking National College qualifications.

The school employs two newly qualified teachers (NQTs), the first NQTs for six years. This is the school's first review.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The executive principal leads the school with pride and passion. Her methodology towards distributed leadership is enabling senior and middle leaders to lead their areas effectively. The school's vision, which everyone shares, is encapsulated in her comment, 'Knowsley Lane School is all about children, children, children'. By successfully modelling the school's vision to others, the executive principal and deputy principal have achieved a significant culture shift where learning is at the heart of the school's work.
- When senior leaders talk about 'being a family' they describe it as being open and honest with each other. The deputy principal said, 'there is a no blame culture'. The caring culture values staff as individual people. Team spirit is strong, and the

- positive ethos echoes the mutual respect that permeates throughout the school.
- Pupils feel truly loved and cared for. An open-door policy (together with frequent coffee and cake mornings!) entice families through the door and is helping them to be involved in their children's learning. Thus, community engagement is increasing as a result of staff going above and beyond the call of duty. For example, almost all Year 6 parents attended the recent parents' evening.
 - Pupils believe that it is very important to attend every day. One Year 4 pupil said, 'if you miss one day, you'll miss a big chunk of learning'. The panel meetings are steadily addressing attendance issues.
 - Teachers hold learning review meetings with each pupil once a term to discuss their learning journey. Teaching assistants (TAs) attend pupil progress meetings together with teachers, and progress for combined subjects is tracked at every meeting. The impact of continuing professional development (CPD) is improving the quality and consistency of teaching and increasing pupils' progress.
 - The 'trunk of the Vantage tree' symbolises the trust's personal learning goals that are linked to the international primary curriculum. The branches represent the school's own curricular drivers. These meet the needs of all pupils, giving them 'roots and wings'. The executive principal said, 'it is our job to prepare our pupils for the world that we know - and the world that has yet to be discovered'.
 - The skills of middle leaders are developing well. Subject leaders help teachers track the progression of knowledge, skills and understanding. The English leader said, 'we put in as much support as possible in the initial stages, then gradually step back to develop independence'.
 - The English leader has used 'Closing the Gap' to develop vocabulary across the school. Pupils know that they need an extensive vocabulary 'to go to university'.
 - NQTs say that they receive excellent support. Their performance is improving rapidly as a result of the valuable training and encouragement leaders are providing.
 - Visits enhance the curriculum, such as to York, Knowsley Safari Park, Formby beach and Liverpool city centre. 'Everton in the community' helps with transport and officials bring previous players to school to discuss barriers that they have overcome in their careers.

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

- ... the English leader attended pupil progress meetings in order to have an overview of whole school achievement.
- ... the implementation of the reading curriculum was consistently embedded throughout the school.
- ... subject leaders modelled how to lead curricular discussions about learning with pupils, so that pupils can articulate the journey of their learning with more clarity and confidence.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- As leaders expected, there was a dip in attainment and progress in 2019 at the end of Key stage 2, which was cohort specific in this one-form entry school. Progress in all three subjects was average and attainment in combined subjects was below the national average. As a result of strong leadership, mathematics results were secure and, for the last three years, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard has been above the national average. At the end of Key Stage 1 in 2019, writing was stronger than reading and mathematics, which were just below the national averages. Phonics results in 2019 were in line with the national average.
- Current pupils generally make good progress, as their neatly presented books indicate. Mathematics books show evidence of fluency, reasoning and problem solving through a variety of activities. A range of writing genres and examples of commendable extended writing link the curriculum.
- Staff demonstrate secure subject and pedagogical knowledge, evident in their use of subject-specific terminology and their skill in addressing pupils' misconceptions at the point of learning. The focus on key vocabulary was evident across the school, demonstrating the impact of CPD. One pupil said, 'our knowledge organisers show us a range of vocabulary to use'.
- Relationships at all levels are respectful and caring. Staff enthusiasm is infectious. The understanding of each pupil's needs enables teachers to plan appropriate learning intentions. A purposeful, calm learning climate pervades the school, so pupils feel secure and happy. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning result in high levels of engagement in lessons and pride in their work.
- Pupils are eager learners who are proud of the school values. A Year 5 lower attaining pupil said, 'if you follow the values, you will be a role model for everyone'. Behaviour and manners are exemplary. In the Year 1/2 class, pupils enthusiastically explained the star reward system.
- Year 6 pupils debated the definition of the term 'intellectual', with one girl saying, 'being intellectual can open many doors. I could be a doctor or a scientist and change the world'. Her friend's response was, 'wouldn't it be amazing to find a cure for something like cancer?'.
- Children in the EYFS are happy and settled as a result of well-established routines and high expectations. Staff make innovative use of the exceptional space indoors and outdoors, providing an extensive range of appealing activities to spark curiosity. Children make good progress through the EYFS from extremely low starting points to reach a good level of development that is broadly in line with the national average.
- Teaching assistants (TAs) are a powerful workforce who make a positive difference to pupils, including those who need extra support and higher attaining pupils.

- Pitch and challenge are appropriate to need. Suitable pace and embedded routines lead to seamless transitions where learning time is maximised. For example, in Year 4, rounding decimals enabled pupils to use a range of strategies.
- Assessment for learning is well embedded. Teachers and TAs 'read the room' to provide immediate feedback. In Year 2, pupils used the traffic light system to convey their understanding and adults used this information to deepen learning.
- Prior learning is revisited, giving opportunities to embed knowledge in the long-term memory. When learning the consequences of an extra chromosome on a baby's development, Year 5 pupils remembered how many chromosomes come from each parent.
- The learning environment around the school shows the extensive breadth of the curriculum. Aspirational displays, such as the 'Hall of Fame', inspire pupils to have ambitions for their future, reinforced by letters from previous Knowsley Lane pupils who are now doctors, accountants, lawyers and teachers.

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

... all staff enabled all pupils to become independent, active learners.

... the culture of reading was deepened, for example, by providing a wide range of visible and accessible books in every area of the school, so that pupils seized every opportunity to pick up a book and read.

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

- Although disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND attained below the national average in 2019, the gap with their peers is narrowing. In 2019, disadvantaged pupils made more progress than non-disadvantaged pupils and the same progress as all pupils nationally in reading and writing. This year, across the school, progress is rising as a result of the actions of the leaders. Pupils with SEND are exceeding their targets this year.
- Disadvantaged pupils are fully included in all activities. Leaders ensure that provision for these groups starts with quality first teaching.
- Highly skilled TAs teach individuals and small groups of pupils. Pre-teaching and same day interventions address gaps in learning successfully. As well as accelerating progress and deepening learning, TAs develop pupils' confidence and sense of success.
- The learning mentor oversees pupils' social development, as well as academic progress. This secures pupils' well-being and readiness for learning. She organises resources, such as play therapists and other specialists, to provide

tailored support, where necessary.

- The PE provision encompasses different levels of competitive sports such as sit-down volleyball which is enormously popular with pupils! Orienteering activities encourage less confident pupils to exercise in a fun way.
- The school links with the University of West London to enable all Key Stage 2 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, to learn the clarinet and take Grades 1 and 2 examinations. Evidence from the feeder senior school shows that many pupils continue their musical learning beyond Knowsley Lane. Year 6 pupils work towards the Lord Derby Award where they participate in a variety of outdoor learning activities.

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

...the attainment gap continued to close towards the national average.

5. Area of Excellence

Accredited

Early Years Foundation Stage Provision...Learn indoors! Learn outdoors!
Stimulating environments to enhance and extend learning for all pupils.

5.1 Why has this area been identified as a strength? What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

Children begin their Knowsley Lane journey from very low starting points, with communication and language and personal, social and emotional development being exceptionally low. Knowsley Lane's EYFS department has continued to grow and develop. The rate of children's progress is rapid, with a high emphasis on building a strong basis of language development inside and outside. Assessment is accurately used daily, weekly, half-termly and on a termly basis. Children's needs are prioritised and planned for in the highly adaptable indoor and outdoor environments, with staff who put learning at the heart of every decision. One cannot fail to be impressed by the organisation, diversity, excitement and adaptability of the indoor and outdoor learning environments. One complements the other and both provide excellent stimuli to ignite every child's curiosity and accelerate progress.

Staff value the contribution that parents bring to school and they constantly strive to deepen links with the community. Parents are encouraged to be active learners in their

children's school life. Leaders work relentlessly to engage parents, ensuring that they understand the importance of the value of education. In-depth, purposeful workshops inform parents of key learning, how they can incorporate learning opportunities inside and outside the home, as well as establishing strong foundations for the rest of the Knowsley Lane journey! Leaders have seen the greatest impact with parents through the programme of education for adults of children in the EYFS. Throughout the year, the Family Learning courses are fully booked with 12 – 15 adults in attendance every week. The focus of the sessions is tailored to the needs of the community, such as maintaining a budget, healthy eating, importance of school attendance, productive play inside and outside, phonics, reading.

5.2 What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?

Over the last three years, outcomes have continued to be in line with the national picture from exceptionally low starting points, as well as diminishing the gap for disadvantaged children over this time. The rate of children's progress across the department is rapid, with a high emphasis on building a strong basis of language development. The impact of the indoor and outdoor learning environments is evident in the accelerated progress children make.

Knowsley Lane's EYFS department prides itself on 'staying fresh' and reviewing the indoor and outdoor learning environments in the light of the changing needs and interests of the children. The EYFS team continues to strive to improve their practice and keep abreast of current research and ideas to support children's learning both indoors and outdoors. There are many opportunities for the team to receive EYFS specific training and they also work closely with colleagues in the trust. The quality of learning environments inside and outside are equally matched with innovative use made of the exceptional space. This ensures that children have frequent opportunities to practise and consolidate early speaking, listening, reading and writing skills within a wealth of exciting, appealing activities.

Knowsley Lane is currently supporting one school in the local authority (new to Vantage Academy Trust). Significant support is being deployed to that school's EYFS setting, with a focus on developing the provision as the additional adult in the room! This is accelerating progress, particularly for disadvantaged children. Leaders are also providing specific EYFS support to Manchester-based schools from within the trust.

Both the principal and deputy principal (the EYFS leader) are involved in internal trust quality assurance reviews where they review different EYFS settings across the trust.

5.3 What is the name, job title and email address of the staff lead in this area?

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

- Mary Collins from Holy Cross RC Primary School, who participated as a reviewer on this review, has already shared her school's Area of Excellence, Pupil Leadership, with the executive principal.
- The executive principal plans to contact Lancot Primary School to discuss the innovative curriculum there.

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.