

Name of School:	Northwood School
Headteacher/Principal:	Mehul Shah
Hub:	Chrysalis Hub
School phase:	11-18
MAT (if applicable):	QED Academy Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	10/05/2024
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Leading
Date of last QA Review	01/11/2019
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	03/10/2018

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 Leading

Quality of provision and outcomes Leading

AND

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

Area of excellence Accredited
Personal Development

**Previously accredited valid areas
of excellence** Not applicable

Overall peer evaluation estimate Leading

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.

Please note that Challenge Partners is a school improvement charity and not a statutory accountability body. The QA Review does not audit schools' safeguarding procedures, handling or behaviour policies, however, Lead Reviewers and visiting reviewers are expected to follow Challenge Partners' Safeguarding Policy and report any concerns.

1. Context and character of the school

Northwood School is an oversubscribed secondary school in Hillingdon. The school has a sixth form. It is one of four schools which make up the QED Academy Trust. There are currently just over a thousand students in the school. The school is increasingly popular and the number of parents making this their first choice school has increased significantly over recent years. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below average. There are more students with education health care plans (EHCP) than the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged students is close to the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds (heritage) who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is much higher than the national average. The attainment on entry is in line with the national average. The school's mission 'is to be a happy, successful school where every individual is enabled to fulfil their potential'.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The vision of leaders is clear and shared by all staff and students. There is a strong culture and ethos of high expectations. Leaders are highly visible and model positive behaviour to all. The 'support to achieve' ethos involves leaders and staff doing whatever they can do to help all students to achieve their potential and beyond.
- Leaders work hard and manage staff workload well. Staff appreciate the positive working environment where their views are valued, and this is reflected in anonymous staff surveys.
- Strategic plans are robust and focused. The school's leading practice at all levels has had a significant impact on raising the quality of education in Northwood School and across the local area, both within and beyond the trust, in a wide variety of meaningful and successful ways.
- Leaders take a strategic and research-based approach to the curriculum. They tailor best practice with Northwood students in mind. There is now a 'six pillars' approach to personal development which brings together existing strengths in several important areas. Curriculum development is supported by strategic links such as collaboration and outreach within the borough, and links to the STEM learning centre and SACRE.
- Leaders empower the strong middle leaders to implement, monitor, evaluate and review their curriculum and the quality of learning over time, driving forward improvements in their areas. Strengths are identified and good practice is shared. Middle leaders say they receive strong support for their initiatives.

- Training, teaching and quality assurance form a cycle of continuous improvement. The monitoring process is developmental, and has been adopted by other local schools. The quality of education team conduct formal learning walks once per half term, including valuable learning conversations with students. There is an open door policy and coaching programme, and staff are able to observe lessons and play a full part in quality assurance and professional development.
- Joint subject planning time is protected. Subject teachers can spend one hour per week planning together and acting upon school priorities. This year, teachers have made further adaptations for students with SEND, following ongoing staff training.
- Pastoral and curriculum leaders collaborate well to address development priorities. The general pastoral team supports all heads of year, who are proactive in leading research-based projects which are specific and beneficial for their year group.
- Students are very well prepared for their next stages and for life in modern Britain. There is a range of guidance and support including the Years 7 to 10 mastering learning programme, and a focus on careers in the curriculum. Careers has a themed year strategy, for example 'inspire' is the Year 7 focus with an author visit. Students receive personalised career planning, complete self-led work experience and there are a range of careers workshops including STEM.

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

... recent initiatives were drawn together to ensure their impact could be measured meaningfully and sustained.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- The curriculum is ambitious, with many students taking ten GCSEs. Nearly nine-tenths of Year 10 students follow an EBacc curriculum. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced and includes subjects beyond the national curriculum such as drama and dance.
- Outcomes are consistently strong every year, with students achieving well, over half a grade better than their peers nationally.

- Students' behaviour is exemplary. They work together very well and are respectful, considerate and thoughtful. Northwood students are focused and engaged in lessons, and are a great credit to the school and wider community.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and challenge students intellectually in lessons. For example, Year 8 students learn about Kant's ontological imperative and the precise causes of the abolition of slavery. Teachers ask challenging questions and give detailed explanations, clearly distilling high level knowledge. Progress is tracked and monitored closely. Feedback and assessment are consistent and involve developmental targets which students respond to very well.
- Literacy is encouraged in all subjects and across the whole school. Teachers carefully explain and model the precise meaning of tier three vocabulary. Reading is successfully encouraged through reading time in form and reading and grammar lessons in English. The Learning Resource Centre is a focal point and there is a culture of scholarship across the school.
- Aspirations are high. The 'Brilliant Club' raises high prior attaining students' aims, and Year 10 and 12 students visit Oxford. Future Frontiers help students track their careers journey and focus students upon their future pathways. The Inspiring Girls project raises girls' aspirations with input from successful women leading in industry.
- Students develop holistically as well as academically. Personal development underpins the school's success. Strategic planning includes a calendar. There are six pillars and provision is responsive to students' needs. Students learn about diversity and are able to challenge stereotypes. One student said, 'I have learned about diversity through my journey at Northwood'. Students can articulate their learning about a range of issues such as neurodiversity and say 'I have educated my parents'. Development of character is exemplary. The school strongly promotes diversity and equality. Diversity advocates facilitate discussion during form time sessions and attend regular meetings. Student voice feedback demonstrates positive impact. The Absolute Education software tracks the wide range of enriching experiences offered by the school to develop cultural capital.
- Leaders and staff promote wellbeing and mental health. The Peer Education Programme includes mindfulness. Students know that staff are approachable and there is a consistent use of student voice in the school including 'the worry box' for students to anonymously raise concerns which staff respond to and address very well.
- Students can lead through the house system and different student leadership programmes such as Interact, Stonewall Champions, Diversity Advocates, Technology Ambassadors and Young Carers. Prefects have a leadership role

within each department as well as leading at school events and mentoring younger students. The school council actively works with school leaders to look at ways that the school can continually improve.

- The sixth form is successful and growing. The Northwood Diploma promotes the community service of sixth form students. There is an aspirational learning culture and all students complete their courses, graduating as well rounded young people who can lead positive change in society.

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

... teachers built in discussion time to help students explore, extend and rehearse their own ideas.

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

- There is a clear strategy in place for all disadvantaged students. The quality of education team and pastoral team work together closely to identify and remove any barriers to learning using research-based solutions. The focus upon high quality teaching for all means that disadvantaged students are consistently challenged well in lessons. Lessons for all students are planned and taught well, resulting in strong progress. Disadvantaged students make more progress than non-disadvantaged students nationally. Progress for SEND support students and students with an EHCP is well above average.
- The school meet differing areas of need, notably cognition and learning, speech and language and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH). The school engages with external agencies when required, including the deployment of speech and language specialists.
- Students with SEND are identified during 'limitless learner' sessions to share strategies which are most effective for specific needs. This includes a graduated approach. There are 'top tips' for teachers and these personalised adaptations are evident in lessons. Suitable adaptations are made for behaviour where required, for example in the use of timeout cards. There are safe spaces for students and an awareness of emotional regulation. Teachers allow students to de-escalate if needed.
- Leaders have made successful actions to further improve persistent absence rates for all students, including key staff working with identified students.

- A recent SEND review and Hillingdon Learning Review praised the school's provision. The specialist resource provision supports students with speech and language acquisition. They make positive progress and are part of whole school life and mainstream lessons. Students receive helpful pre-teaching of subject specific vocabulary from learning support assistants. There are successful interventions in reading and phonics. The Rapid Plus Reading Programme helps students who are not yet reading at an age appropriate level to swiftly catch up with their peers.
- School led tutoring is targeted and monitored very well. Aspirations are high, with three-quarters of students gaining one grade or more following an hour per week of precision intervention from subject specialist teachers.
- Expectations and aspirations are high for all students. The Scholars Programme brings together the work of the Brilliant Club and benefits disadvantaged students' skills of written communication, subject knowledge and critical thinking.
- Actions are successful in raising participation in wider opportunities from disadvantaged students. This participation is tracked using the Absolute Education programme. Leaders consider the views of students, and offer a wide range of personalised opportunities. Wider opportunities bring learning to life. Each subject has a wider opportunity champion and examples include students learning about 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and considering all aspects of theatre production. These raise the cultural capital of all students.

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

... teachers and learning support assistants worked more closely together to provide even more effective support to students.

5. Area of Excellence

Personal development

Accredited

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

Personal development provision is a strength for many reasons. The strategic 'six pillars' approach draws together existing and embedded strengths within provision. These pillars link together well to form a coherent and responsive whole. Provision is carefully mapped using a calendar which outlines how all activities link together. There is a clear spiral curriculum intent and leaders are very clear about the expected outcomes.

The first pillar is relationships, sex and health education, where there is an age appropriate and progressive approach. The second pillar is the personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) curriculum which teaches students priority topics within each strand of PSHCE every year. There is a wide and well-chosen links with external providers. The third pillar is wider opportunities which enriches students' experiences with a range of well-chosen activities. Specific opportunities include 'The Brilliant Club' 'Future Frontiers' and 'Inspiring Girls'. The fourth pillar is inclusion and equality, which helps students to understand diversity and the protected characteristics. The diversity programme has six strands, each focusing upon a different facet of identity. The protected characteristics are explicitly referenced and there are links in this pillar with British values. The fifth pillar is careers information, guidance and advice which encourages students to explore careers from Year 7 onwards. Each year group has a specific careers theme, and activities are shaped around the megatrends of the future and what employers want. The 'World of Work' month links curriculum learning to industry. The sixth and final pillar is positive mental health and wellbeing which provides 'steps for your mental health @ Northwood'. This stepped approach integrates a wide range of support. The school's Choices Mental Health Framework provides a programme of training for students, staff and parents. This helps students make changes using the '5 S' approach and provides a common language to support positive emotional wellbeing in a practical way.

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

Students consistently achieve and make strong academic progress. Leaders have developed a holistic personal development approach, and this strong provision has had an impact on students' published outcomes and also on qualitative data. PSHCE lessons also demonstrate impact as students learn about and discuss issues which are meaningful to them. Leaders monitor the attitudes to learning in PSHCE across Years 7 to 10 at each data drop point. The modal average ATL score is grade two, demonstrating a positive attitude to learning.

Student focus groups rotate through the year. They demonstrate positive feedback regarding PSHCE content. For example in February 2024, Year 9 students said that the employability and careers unit was well timed just before the options choosing process. Student voice feedback demonstrates sustained learning within the spiral curriculum. Students make progress in their knowledge and understanding as they revisit core topics within themed units as they progress up through the school. Students are able to have a voice regarding their own learning needs and curriculum adaptation within PSHCE.

Wider opportunities such as Future Frontiers and The Globe Players have a positive impact on enriching students' cultural capital. Careers provision such as the World of Work month with external speakers includes a recent focus on the creative industry and this has engaged students. Form tutors have been able to use the 'next steps' document to help guide the students and as a result achievement and progress are high.

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

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Following the QA Review

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>)