

Name of School:	Old Palace Primary School
Head teacher/Principal:	Mr G. Palmer
Hub:	Inspire
School type:	Community
Date of last QA Review	5/03/2018
Date of this Review:	18/03/2019

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. Context and character of the school

- Old Palace Primary School is in Bromley by Bow, one of the most deprived areas in the country. Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Twenty-one home languages are used and 90% of pupils have English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is over two times the average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, although an above average proportion has an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP).
- Health levels in the area are low, hence the school places emphasis on healthy lifestyles.
- The school's recently revised values, 12 in all, include Fairness, responsibility and ambition. There is a focus on a particular value each month of the year.
- The name Old Palace derives from the use of the site as a hunting lodge during the era of Queen Anne.

2.1 School Improvement Strategies - Progress from previous EBIs

- Leaders have become more outward facing. Staff in each year group undertook research into a variety of aspects of teaching and learning, including mixed ability pairing, self-selection of tasks and open-ended activities. During the recent revision of the school's values, the headteacher researched the published values of many successful schools to inform the school-wide debate.
- Leaders have increased the frequency of moderation, and this has contributed to improvements in the teaching, learning and assessment of reading.

2.2 School Improvement Strategies - What went well

- 'We leave no stone unturned' was one leader's response when asked how, despite the potential barriers to learning, the school achieves outstanding outcomes. This unwavering commitment to ensuring all pupils do as well as they can is evident at every turn.
- Under the insightful guidance of the headteacher, leaders at all levels play a significant role in sustaining high standards. This is not at the expense of work/life balance. The well-being of staff is high on the agenda. Through leading by example, leaders set clear expectations for staff and pupils. The revised core values, for example, positivity, ambition and collaboration, apply equally to pupils and staff, and are palpable across the school.
- A tour of the school leaves an impression more akin to a university campus than a primary school. Adults and children respond extremely well to the oasis of calm that permeates the environment. Relationships are mutually respectful and underpin the high quality of learning and teaching.
- Leaders have adopted the Challenge Partners approach to monitoring learning and teaching, using WWW and EBI, rather than a conventional check list. As well as peer observations and individual visits by senior staff, the SLT spends a whole day in each year group each year. This provides a clear idea of learning across the curriculum from a child's eye view, and results in highly focussed and pertinent feedback. In turn, CPD is bespoke to the year group team. Support staff benefit from regular updates. The school has been accredited by the CPD Certification Service for its work in this regard.
- A sharp eye is kept on pupils' progress. Leaders can instantaneously pinpoint where gaps between different groups need attention. Such information is used by leaders to set up carefully targeted support. The impact of this process is evident, for example, in the impressive performance of disadvantaged pupils.
- Middle leaders are exceptionally effective. Their passion for their subjects or areas of responsibility is picked up by the pupils. They are empowered to drive developments and are strong advocates of the school's core values.
- Curriculum design is a major strength. Foundation subject topics are carefully chosen and, where possible, geared to pupils' everyday lives. Following the questions, 'What do you know...what would you like to know... how will you find out?', pupils use information books, QR codes and internet searches to research the topic. Teachers then set practical tasks with a skills element and unit concludes with multi-faceted assessment.

- Healthy lifestyles are embedded in the curriculum. Pupils participate in some form of exercise every day. A 'health week' incorporating sports day, is an annual event. Strong partnerships with other schools and local businesses enrich learning. Leaders support the teacher training programmes at Goldsmiths College and have developed beneficial partnerships with a range of agencies.

2.3 School Improvement Strategies - Even better if...

...leaders considered submitting curriculum design or the impact of middle leadership as areas of excellence for the next review.

3.1 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Progress from previous EBIs

Teachers have successfully refined their questioning and have increased the use of practical resources to support learning in mathematics. Excellent headway has been made in promoting high standards of presentation.

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

- Teachers set the bar high and pupils rise to the challenge. One teacher's comment, 'We need to convince pupils that they are better than they think they are' exemplifies the approach.
- Children soon settle in to the Reception classes. Teachers establish warm relationships with them. They capitalise on children's inquisitiveness, demonstrating a perceptive understanding of how young children learn. Adults encourage children to find things out for themselves and take every opportunity to model correct sentence structure and widen children's vocabulary
- Across the school, pupils confidently talk about their learning and are keen, resourceful and reflective. This was evident when a Year 2 pupil explained the sequence of self-support as, 'Think harder, ask an expert (we're all expert in something), consult the working wall.' Access to the resource pack on the back of pupils' chairs facilitates independence in Key Stage 1.
- Teachers create stimulating classrooms where pupils' work is celebrated. 'Working walls' are a common feature, where pupils' ideas are collected and used to support, reinforce and extend learning during lessons. After reviewing the impact of the classroom environment, teachers have struck an effective balance between prompts and hints for learning, and displays of pupils' work. Strategies to enrich pupils' vocabulary are used effectively across the school.
- Standards of presentation have dramatically improved. Teachers provide excellent role models. Every display has handwritten titles. High quality work books, including specially designed covers and pre-printed information about the sequence of topics through each year, have resulted in a sea-change in pupils' handwriting and general presentation; they took great pride in showing their work to the reviewers.
- Teaching assistants are well briefed and make a valuable contribution. They are confident in supporting pupils through questioning; at the same time avoiding spoon-feeding.

- Teachers capture and sustain pupils' engagement by interpreting the curriculum imaginatively. Many topics include an educational visit. Lessons allow pupils to develop a sound understanding of people and communities beyond their own experience.
- Skilfully planning for different groups means inclusion in lessons is frequently seamless. All pupils generally study the same thing, but staff are adept at scaffolding learning or promoting a greater depth of understanding. Targeted questioning features strongly in most lessons. Time is used efficiently. A brisk pace is set when appropriate, but pupils also have opportunities to reflect on their own learning.
- On-going assessment and feedback are integral to most lessons. Teachers ensure pupils are clear about success criteria and this enables pupils to make informed comments about their own work and that of their classmates. Wipe boards providing instant information, the judicious use of mini-plenaries and 'in the moment' marking all help to pinpoint pupils' next steps.

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

...teachers encouraged pupils to take further ownership of their own learning, in line with the current initiative regarding growth mindset and the ambition to further develop links with pupils' interests, aptitudes and day-to-day lives.

4. Outcomes for Pupils

- Over three-quarters of children entering Reception have typically attended local nurseries. Their personal, social and emotional development moves on apace. Continuous emphasis on developing children's key language and number skills leads to rapid progress. They make similar progress in other areas, although children's understanding of the world tends to be weaker. By the end of Reception, the proportion reaching a good level of development is generally in line with the national average.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 continue to make good headway. The results of the Year 1 phonics check have been above average for the last five years. In 2018, all pupils who met or exceeded expectations in reading, writing and mathematics in Reception did so in by the end of Year 2. Outcomes are typically above average. The proportion of pupils reaching a greater depth has increased annually across all subjects and has been consistently well above the national average.
- Over the last 3 years, SAT results at Key Stage 2 in combined reading, writing and mathematics have increased annually in terms of both expected and high attainment. In 2018, almost pupils reached the expected standards against two-thirds nationally and the proportion reaching the higher standards was twice the national average. Progress from Key Stage 1 is consistently above average in writing and mathematics. Progress in reading varies a little and is an on-going priority.

- The outcomes of disadvantaged pupils are a real success story. In 2018 the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Key Stage 1 was above the national benchmark for all pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress scores through Key Stage 2 were well above average, and the proportion of disadvantaged pupils attaining expected levels in all three subjects was an impressive 94% (non-disadvantaged NA 70%); twice as many reached the higher standard as the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils.
- Currently, pupils with SEND all have learning needs rather than physical disabilities. The meticulous tracking of their progress towards individual targets indicates good or better progress. This is evident, not least, in the high proportion of these pupils reaching expected standards by the end of each Key Stage.
- Any gender differences are successfully addressed. Predictions for the end of this year indicate diminishing gaps across the board in Key Stage 1. Where gaps narrowed in 2018 this was due to the school securing higher attainment by boys. Conversely, girls are the focus this year. At Key Stage 2 in 2017 and 2018, both boys and girls achieved results above the national average at expected and high standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Notwithstanding these positive outcomes, any emerging gender differences are tackled effectively, as evident in the narrowing gaps predicted for this year.
- A close eye is kept on the achievement of the few pupils with English as their first language and they are well supported. Their progress varies depending on their individual circumstances, for example several have an EHCP.

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

Leaders are keen to share their expertise widely across the network, particularly in relation to curriculum design and the role of middle leaders.