

REVIEW REPORT FOR
ISLEWORTH AND SYON
SCHOOL FOR BOYS

Name of School:	Isleworth and Syon School for Boys
Headteacher/Principal:	Simon Fisher and Jo Higginbottom
Hub:	Chrysalis
School phase:	Secondary (11-18)
MAT (if applicable):	Standalone Academy

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	N/A
Date of this Review:	12/11/2025
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	N/A
Date of last QA Review:	12/12/2018
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	14/11/2023

Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising host school leaders and visiting reviewers, agrees that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

Leadership at all levels N/A

Quality of provision and outcomes N/A

AND

Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with additional needs N/A

Area of excellence N/A

Previously accredited valid areas of excellence Performing Arts: curricular and extracurricular contributions to the school, 12/12/2018

Overall peer evaluation estimate N/A

Important information

- The QA Review provides a peer evaluation of a school's practice in curriculum, teaching and learning, and leadership. It is a voluntary and developmental process, and the peer review team can evaluate and offer 'peer evaluation estimates' based only on what the school chooses to share with them.
- The QA Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades. The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is developmental not judgmental.
- The QA Review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. If you choose to share this report, or extracts thereof, externally (e.g. on your website or with parents), please ensure that it is accompanied with the following text:

Challenge Partners is a charity working to advance education for the public benefit. We are not a statutory accountability body. The QA Review does not audit schools' safeguarding or behaviour policies and practices. However, Lead Reviewers and visiting reviewers are expected to follow Challenge Partners' safeguarding policy and report any concerns as set out in the procedures.

1. Context and character of the school

Isleworth and Syon is a boys' school with a mixed Sixth Form. It is situated in the London Borough of Hounslow and is a standalone academy. There are 1035 students on roll, drawn from a fully comprehensive intake. The Sixth Form numbers 195 students.

The community the school serves is diverse and this is reflected in the make-up of the school population. Nearly a quarter of students are of Indian ethnicity, with approximately a further half identifying as African, Pakistani or other ethnicities, including White British. These numbers differ significantly from national averages.

A small proportion of students have an education and health care plan (EHCP), whilst over a tenth receive support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Support for students with SEND and other additional needs is provided through a resource known as "the link". Well over a quarter of students are disadvantaged. Nearly two thirds speak English as an additional language (EAL) - a number which is both well above average and rising.

The two co-headteachers are supported by a deputy headteacher and six assistant headteachers. The school's mission can be summed up as a constant striving for excellence, underpinned by a desire to produce "mature, confident and considerate" young people.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The school treasures its ethos and values. Leaders have translated these into comprehensive statements which appear on the school's website. These inform all academic, pastoral and enrichment programmes. Leaders expect students' behaviour and learning to reflect their aspiration for a fully rounded education. The impact of this is evident in the responsible behaviour of students in and around the school at all times. An example was provided by the orderly conduct observed in a crowded dining hall.
- Student leadership opportunities are strong throughout the school and have been rolled out further into the sixth form. A student leadership team meets with the headteachers fortnightly, meaning that students say they are listened to. It was demonstrated by the involvement of sixth form students in supporting younger students' reading and by Key Stage 4 students carrying out librarian duties.
- The development of leadership at all levels is a strength. In Year 11 history and Year 8 science, early career teachers (ECTs) displayed successful behaviour management and adapted their teaching to meet the needs of all learners. Such practice results from robust professional tutoring.

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- A notable feature of the continuing professional development (CPD) programme is the in-house training of “emerging leaders”. These staff feel supported in their roles and have opportunities to access additional training and research.
- Leaders are keen to hear from staff, students and parents about the performance of the school and areas capable of improvement. Leaders have set themselves three "whole school objectives" derived from survey findings. Currently, the focus is on embedding respectful behaviour amongst students, "responsive teaching and learning" and readiness to learn.
- Leaders have devised a teaching and learning handbook which outlines a comprehensive repertoire of classroom practice. This is not prescriptive but provides a range of strategies for engaging students and supporting them across the spectrum of needs and abilities. The current focus on responsive teaching requires that teachers practise hinge questioning, cold calling and representative sampling.
- The co-headteachers have identified a “golden thread” of best practice from the host of available strategies. They promote dialogic questioning, modelling (especially of fluent reading) and a proactive stance in the classroom. Teachers are expected to circulate frequently when they teach.
- Pastoral leadership is characterised by horizontal and vertical structures. The work of Heads of Year and Heads of House is underpinned by a “ready, respectful, safe” philosophy. They and other middle leaders ensure that in-house priorities such as punctuality, oracy in class and reading habits are monitored. They have ensured that there is a reward system to aid this process.
- Year group assemblies are used as an opportunity to convey key messages about “character” together with the hallmarks of successful learners. In a Year 8 assembly, students were tasked with undertaking an act of kindness under the auspices of “World Kindness Day”. At the same time updates were shared about lateness to lessons.

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

- ... the school’s vision for its curriculum was more explicitly stated along with its scope for providing universal challenge.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- The school’s current teaching and learning initiatives are enacted in the most productive classrooms. In Year 9 art the teacher modelled larger scale art projects by means of a visualiser. This enabled students to appreciate immediately what was expected of them. Verbal and written feedback had impact, with students articulating their strengths and what needed to be done to improve.

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- In line with the focus on classroom “mobility” this year, teachers and students are often found to interact with each other, generating a creative buzz. In Year 10 English and Year 10 engineering, students were actively encouraged to work with their peers on how best to respond in writing to the exercises in question. In both cases, students and staff moved around the room and engaged with each other in verbal questioning, discussion and explanation.
- A creative atmosphere was established from the outset In a Year 7 music lesson. All students were engaged and evidently enjoying the lesson. The teacher used the “cold calling” strategy to consolidate knowledge, supporting this with verbal feedback. Tailored support was provided for disadvantaged students. The teacher used visual prompts throughout and provided numerous opportunities for students to work with their peers.
- In the sixth form, business studies in Year 12 is taught with strong levels of attention to the examination rubric. Students spoken to described how this inspired confidence. In Year 13, students’ work is assessed online and formatively in class. In the best cases, the teacher had one-to-one discussions with students about specific aspects of their work and/or sat with them to provide personalised comments and insights.
- The school prioritises its “high potential learners” (HPLs). It is ambitious for all its students but is keen to ensure those with high prior attainment and those from disadvantaged backgrounds are effectively stretched and challenged in class. A senior leader has been tasked with identifying these students and monitoring their progress.
- A wide range of “student ambassador” roles is available, which incentivises student involvement in sport, reading and literacy, pastoral life and citizenship. In meetings, these students consistently demonstrated a positive outlook, expressing great enthusiasm for their roles. There was a strong sense of community. For the students, the most important aspect of the role was to “get everyone together”.
- The literacy lead is positive about her role and sees reading and the nurturing of it as a “mission”. She stated that “the joyous thing about my job is fostering a love of reading”. This enthusiasm spreads to teachers, who model good reading in “study support” tutorial sessions and who advertise their own reading “likes”. The national press recently reported glowingly on the school’s scheme to stimulate the reading habit in over thirty “reluctant readers”.
- In an “edge” class for weaker readers in Year 9, reading was the focus. The teacher’s reading was dramatised and carefully planned so that important questions about comprehension of the text “Holes” and aspects of spelling and pronunciation could be addressed effectively.

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- Students are supported in developing a career path by means of an online system (“Unifrog”). This is carefully tracked by staff meaning that any gaps in provision can be easily identified and addressed. Sixth form students reported that they are aware of their options and feel prepared for their next steps. They cited the personalised careers advice from the careers advisor and work experience as invaluable in this process.

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

- ... creative approaches to providing individualised feedback on students’ learning were developed and implemented routinely.
- ... strategies for effective questioning, as modelled by key practitioners, were put into practice consistently across the curriculum.

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

- Disadvantaged students in Key Stage 4 at risk of not progressing into employment or education are prioritised. Under a new initiative, round table meetings consisting of a range of pastoral staff have been organised, with full parental and “workplace mentor” involvement. These are designed to motivate “case study” Year 11 GCSE borderline candidates to achieve their minimum expected grades and plan effectively for their next steps.
- The guiding principle of support for students with SEND is positive relationships. The open-door policy of “the link” provision epitomises the positive culture of the school and its leaders’ commitment to openness and strong relationships.
- The co-ordinator for provision for students with SEND (SENDCo) quality assures the implementation of support strategies, ensuring there is appropriate input into staff training. The feedback from learning support assistants (LSAs) in class is important in this process. In addition, senior leaders ensure that inclusion is a “golden thread” in their regular learning walk programme.
- Vulnerable students reported that they had a voice. They were confident in their responses about the support they received and felt a strong sense of belonging. These students praised the connections they made with teachers and support staff, especially in “the link”, and their understanding of what helps them learn.
- Students reported that the support they had received for a range of SEND needs had been extremely helpful. Five students with an EHCP were spoken to about the support they received for a range of needs. One student had progressed successfully into the sixth form. All agreed that their performance or behaviour had improved because of the school's support for them.

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- The literacy lead has a strong grasp of the complexities of effective intervention strategies, allied to the demands of supporting the large number of EAL students. Baseline testing of all students on entry and the early identification of EAL learners are fundamental to the school's approach. Interventions across Key Stage 3 are in place for approximately 180 students. Gaps in reading ages often close rapidly for the target groups, with students with EAL often performing exceptionally well in public examinations.

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

- ... gaps in the performance of disadvantaged students at GCSE on key measures were closed further.

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 content reports from across the partnership of schools and trusts including using AI tools to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector (sharing these with the partnership) each year. The QA Review reports remain confidential to Challenge Partners and the host school. This ensures that schools embrace the review as a development process, acting as a catalyst for their ongoing improvement. This is the primary purpose of the QA review. However, our aim is that the thematic analysis will demonstrate the additional value of a sector wide overview, illustrated with real-life examples.

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 partnership of schools. The School Support Directory 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>)