



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR ASTREA ACADEMY WOODFIELDS

Name of School:	Astrea Academy Woodfields
Head teacher/Principal:	Joanne Cater
Hub:	Astrea Hub
School type:	Academy
MAT (if applicable):	Astrea Academies Trust
Date of review:	28 th -30 th January

1. Context and character of the school

- Astrea Academy Woodfields is an 11-18 school which joined Astrea Academies Trust (AAT) in September 2018. AAT was awarded 'northern hub' government funding to boost standards in 'challenging and disadvantaged areas.' The academy is in an exciting period of development which will include extensive refurbishment and new building work with the aim of providing an outstanding learning environment.

The current principal, who is a specialist leader in education, was appointed on 23rd October 2018 and, with the exception of one person, the entire leadership team and a third of teachers are new. The school is not fully staffed. The predecessor school (Balby Carr School) was placed in Special Measures following its Ofsted inspection in April 2017. The monitoring visit in May 2018 confirmed that the school is taking effective action to bring about improvements.

The school is of average-size, although it is one of the biggest in Doncaster. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils (roughly half) is well above average. Most pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. There is an increasing number of overseas pupils joining the school at an early stage of English development. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEN) is above average.

2.1 School Improvement Strategies - Progress from previous EBIs

- N/A as this is the school's first QA Review

2.2 School Improvement Strategies - What went well

- The school faced significant challenges in the past with a history of low standards and inconsistent leadership. The current principal, ably assisted by strong senior leaders, together with the support of the Astrea Academies Trust (AAT), has acted swiftly to put the school on a much more stable footing. The school has moved a long way forwards in four months, from a very low base.
- More focussed leadership has raised staff expectations and morale. Leaders know the school well and self-evaluation is honest and accurate. Actions for improvement are sharply defined and there is a strong sense of everyone moving forwards together. Pupils and staff recognise the changes that have been brought about and are very positive about the improvements.
- Staff at the academy have worked hard to engage with parents, many of whom have traditionally been reluctant to do so. For example, leaders have held

parents' meetings in working men's clubs and in a boxing club. Consequently, increasing numbers of parents are coming to school events and parents' confidence in the school is rising.

- Leaders and personnel from the trust have placed a strong emphasis on teachers' professional development. Dedicated training time is helping teachers to hone their skills. Subject specialists and consultants from the trust visit regularly to spearhead training, offer support to teachers who need extra help and model good practice. The trust and the local training school offer additional, high quality bespoke training in a number of areas such as coaching. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is improving.
- Leaders have begun work on reviewing the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of learners. Lessons in personal, social and health education are being introduced for all pupils to encourage greater cultural awareness. Increasingly, pupils are being offered curricular opportunities to enable them to achieve higher quality outcomes.
- Staff are now held much more rigorously to account. Weak teaching is being tackled and pupils' progress is assessed and tracked on a much more regular basis. Middle leaders are more empowered and are growing in confidence in their role.
- Many pupils enter the school with weak literacy and numeracy skills. Consequently, the school has introduced targeted reading support for pupils in Key Stage 3. School leaders can point to a number of successes in this area.
- After a period of turbulent staffing, the school has appointed a number of high-quality teachers. Teachers value the developmental opportunities the school offers and the collaboration with neighbouring schools. For example, better collaboration with primary schools is leading to stronger support for pupils moving from Year 6 to Year 7. Such strategies are having a positive impact on teacher recruitment and retention, as well as enhancing pupils' progress.

2.3 School Improvement Strategies - Even better if...

...leaders provide more opportunities for staff to research, debate and witness outstanding practice in teaching and learning before embedding their findings.

...there was even more focus on developing a curriculum appropriate to the needs and aspirations of pupils.

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

- N/A as this is the school's first QA Review

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

- The school has a very strong focus on improving teaching and learning and it is central to its school improvement strategy. Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning and recognise that it needs to improve quickly in order for pupils to make better progress. There is no doubt that the quality of teaching is moving forward.
- Leaders have concentrated hard on improving pupils' behaviour for learning. Their strategies are effective because the climate for learning in classrooms is generally very positive. Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong.
- Pupils are keen to learn and, in the vast majority of cases, set to work quickly and willingly. Many can articulately explain what they are learning and, in the main, their level of engagement in class activities is high.
- Where learning was most effective, such as in English, art, product design, history and Spanish, teachers planned lessons carefully to maximise pupils' progress. They used high quality resources and pitched work at a level that made pupils think hard. Teachers were clear about their expectations and checked learning at regular intervals through skilful questioning. Activities were well planned with good quality resources and lessons proceeded at a swift pace. In turn, this led to high pupil engagement and consequently pupils made good progress.
- Pupils in Year 11 have a great deal of ground to make up. Reviewers saw lessons in which teachers enabled pupils to successfully tackle examination questions and which helped pupils to fill the gaps in their knowledge.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new marking and feedback policy. Some teachers are beginning to use this effectively to give pupils subject specific advice to help them improve their work.
- Pupils' books are neat and well-presented and they have a pride in their work. Leaders say this is a marked step-change from a few months ago and demonstrates that pupils are responding to the higher expectations asked of them. Increasingly, teachers are giving pupils opportunities to improve their literacy skills by writing in an extended way.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong. Monitoring processes are now much more robust. Senior and middle leaders are involved in quality assurance and external verification is provided by personnel from the trust, neighbouring academies and external consultants. Performance management systems have been strengthened and training needs arise coherently from performance reviews.

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

- ... teachers planned lessons which enabled pupils to lead their own learning, independently and collaboratively.
- ... teachers used accurate assessment information to plan lessons that accelerate pupils' progress through an appropriate curriculum.

...teachers delivered lessons which inspired all pupils to think hard and have a thirst for learning.

4. Outcomes for Pupils

- Pupils enter Astrea Academy Woodfields with attainment that is well below average in all year groups. A significant number arrive without any Key Stage 2 prior attainment data.
- Key Stage 4 published outcomes for 2018, under the legacy academy, were significantly below the national average for both progress and attainment. Moreover, these outcomes represented a 3-year trend of declining standards.
- Poor teaching in the past, together with turbulent staffing, have been detrimental to pupils' learning and progress over time. While there is still a significant way to go before pupils have caught up with their peers nationally, improving outcomes for current pupils shows that better teaching is beginning to have a positive impact.
- Current pupils across the school are benefiting from higher quality, more stable staffing. While many of them still have plenty of ground to make up, the school's assessment information, together with work in their books, shows that their progress is starting to speed up across year groups and subjects. However, leaders are aware that there is still a good deal of variation.
- Senior and middle leaders are now much more focussed on monitoring teaching and learning. As a result, the school's own information shows that current Year 11 pupils are making better progress than their peers at the same time last year.
- A number of pupils attend off-site provision. Their progress continues to present challenges for the school as many have significant needs. Leaders are tackling this by making provision for them, where appropriate, back in the academy.
- Disadvantaged pupils, whose progress has been particularly weak in the past, are still underperforming in relation to other pupils nationally. Leaders can point to some successes in improving disadvantaged pupils' attendance levels although this has yet to impact significantly on their progress.
- Much work is being done to raise the aspirations of the most able pupils. For example, by the end of this academic year, 160 pupils will have engaged with universities in York, Sheffield and Cambridge. A recent careers event, attended by 30 providers, helped pupils to consider their future paths and encouraged them to aim high.
- Leaders recognise that pupils who have SEN and those who speak English as an additional language, need more support to make the progress of which they are capable.
- The school's systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress have been sharpened. Work completed by pupils in Key Stage 4 is moderated against that of pupils in neighbouring schools and across the trust so leaders know their judgements are accurate. Interventions for Year 11 pupils are helping them to

consolidate their knowledge, skills and understanding.

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

The school would like to reflect on any further support they might need.

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.