



SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL[®]



CHALLENGE PARTNERS REVIEW
FEBRUARY 2025



'Enabling collaboration between schools and trusts to combine our wisdom and improve the life chances of children.'

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It is with great pride that I present to you Springfield School's Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review Report for 2025. We are delighted that the expert review team found *Leadership at all levels* to be 'Leading', and the *Quality of provision and outcomes* to be 'Effective'.

For the first time, the school has been accredited for an *Area of excellence*; namely, 'How to improve careers provision in one year to meet or excel in the Gatsby Benchmarks'. We note the role of leaders and staff in implementing and enhancing our ambitious careers provision and its impact on achieving strong student outcomes.

As you will be aware, Challenge Partners is a national partnership of schools and trusts who believe the best way to reduce educational inequality and enhance the life chances of children is through collaboration, challenge and leadership development. Challenge Partners works to ensure every school community can benefit from the combined wisdom of the education system.

The flagship Quality Assurance Review is a three-day rigorous peer evaluation. Headed by an expert lead reviewer, reviews are conducted by a trained team of headteachers and senior leaders from schools within Challenge Partners. Working with the host school, they celebrate the school's strengths and identify areas for development, looking closely at the experiences of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds or with additional needs. All review activities are joint and all outputs are agreed with the school. It is a robust process that is 'done with, not to'.

The Quality Assurance Review took place over three days (05th-07th February 2025). Review activities included joint learning explorations and lesson observations, pupil voice interviews, meetings with leaders and staff, and detailed scrutiny of the school's GCSE results and other key performance indicators. The Review Team was directed by Ms G Atkinson, an Ofsted-experienced Lead Reviewer, and consisted of four senior leaders from different secondary academies. Each member of the review team was able to identify a number of areas of good practice that they would be taking back to their own organisation.

This encouraging and extremely positive report reflects the vision, commitment and hard work of the leaders, teachers and support staff within the school to provide the very best education that they can for the children in our care. I thank them sincerely for what they do on behalf of our school community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'S Spivey'.

Sara Spivey
CEO, The De Curci Trust
Headteacher, Springfield School



'Springfield's aim is to 'inspire our students with a love of learning, a desire to innovate and a sense of discovery and optimism for their twenty first century world'.'

1. Context and character of the school

Springfield School is an average sized, 11 – 16 mixed secondary school. The purpose-built school buildings and grounds provide students with plenty of pleasant outdoor space.

The school's location within Portsmouth is an area of well below average deprivation and the student deprivation base is below average. The proportion of disadvantaged students is close to average. The majority of students are of White British heritage, although a diverse range is represented. The proportion of students for whom English is an additional language is close to the national average.

The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is above the national average, whilst for those with an education, health and care plan, it is well below the national average.

The school is in the county of Hampshire and sits within Portsmouth local authority (LA). It is an academy converter within The De Curci Trust with two other schools. Springfield's aim is 'to inspire our students with a love of learning, a desire to innovate and a sense of discovery and optimism for their twenty first century world'. In order to help its students achieve this, Springfield seeks to instil a culture to be 'ready, respectful and safe' (RRS).

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- To deal with a changing cohort, leaders support teachers to use the RRS framework to set high expectations with students about how to be ready to learn, as well as providing the necessary resources to help them. Staff and students agree that school is much calmer.
- In order to further develop respectful relationships, leaders have secured funding for two years from the LA. Leaders provide staff with scripted conversations for dealing with behavioural issues which students appreciate. One student was overheard asking whether they could have a 'restorative conversation' with their teacher.
- Leaders analyse a range of routine surveys from staff, students and parents to identify strategic priorities. Governors support the effective deployment of resources to achieve these priorities, such as new roles, which has resulted in a number of areas showing improvement. This includes increasing student attendance, reducing student suspensions, increased student participation in enrichment activities and students achieving better results in national examinations. Similarly, the headteacher has recently recruited or promoted a strong group of leaders with specific responsibilities linked to strategic priorities, such as an alternative provision leader, a careers leader and an early career teacher (ECT) leader. These leaders have all had a positive impact confirmed by external experts, such as the teaching school hub's glowing report on the provision for the seven ECTs.
- Staff professional development (PD) links directly to the strategic priorities. In particular, teachers' whole school training on ideas for and the benefits of starter activities, called 'do nows', has led to students' improved readiness when they enter the classroom. As one student explained, 'Our 'do nows' switch us on for the lessons. I remember more.'



'Students value the range of leadership and wider opportunities available from Year 7 [and] appreciate how well their voice is listened and responded to, consistently rating this aspect highly in surveys.'

- Middle leaders value the high priority given to their leadership development. As well as excitement about membership of Challenge Partners' 'Middle Leaders Development Programme', many are supported to achieve their national professional qualifications. Subject leaders played a key role in the Head of School's working party to develop the school's teaching expectations. Called 'the consistent classroom', subject leaders developed their own strategic plans around them for launch last September.
- Teachers very much value the new 'consistent classroom' framework, describing it as a tool that has already led to a calmer climate for learning because students better understand the consistent language now used by staff. Following feedback from lesson drop-in visits, leaders provide teachers with opportunities to go and see strong pedagogy in practice.
- Students value the range of leadership and wider opportunities available from Year 7. They attend community action groups across the city, such as volunteering in planting days for a green city as part of Portsmouth Vision.
- Leaders have responded and moved forward on the five EBIs from the last Challenge Partners review. This includes routine visits to all alternative provision every half-term and contact with parents every two weeks; employing an attendance officer; appointing a literacy lead to each subject area and working with the LA to profile reading ages; and providing specialist software, DocsPlus, during class assessments to support students with access arrangements. Students will be filmed for this latter improvement, as the school takes on the role of champion across Portsmouth.

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

None identified.



'Leaders design a curriculum offer that is broad and ambitious... In Key Stage 4, a high proportion of students follow courses in languages and humanities and for those interested in extending their studies, further mathematics and statistics are an option.'

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Leaders design a curriculum offer that is broad and ambitious, in line with the National Curriculum. In Key Stage 4, a high proportion of students follow courses in languages and humanities and for those interested in extending their studies, further mathematics and statistics are an option.
- Subject leaders' clear sequencing of their curriculum areas means that many students can recall learning from their previous lesson. Students say that routine consolidation and reflection lessons helps them to understand and remember.
- Teachers are clear about the knowledge, skills, and vocabulary that students must learn. This enables them to ask questions that check and extend students' understanding, as well as help those who are struggling to find the correct answer, such as advising 'say what you see' when interpreting a cartoon image on the post-industrial economy in the UK. As a result, students know that teachers will not let them opt out if they are asked a question and most students participate even if they are uncertain of their answer. In the best lessons, teachers use cold calling to target their questions to the appropriate student.
- Science and mathematics teachers make abstract concepts more concrete by using interesting examples, such as the use of passive and active resistance on a spectrum, visual modelling of ' x ', ' x^2 ' ' x^3 ' as lines, squares and cubes and referencing the number line when subtracting algebraic terms.
- Teachers explicitly emphasise subject specific language in the majority of lessons and across displays. In the best lessons, teachers develop word consciousness by explaining the etymology, such as the Latin root of per, annum and princeps so that students could transfer their learning about interest rates in mathematics to other subjects. Work in books shows students using subject specific vocabulary in science, English, history, geography and mathematics.
- Students routinely read in their tutor time. Leaders plan to introduce a high quality reading curriculum and to use those teachers already skilled in teaching and performing reading to train all tutors.
- Heads of Achievement share the results of competitions on 'Monitoring Monday'. This includes equipment and uniform checks, quizzes, attendance and other behaviour measures. Likewise, school strategies for behaviour in the consistent classroom allow students to focus and concentrate on learning. This has led to teachers awarding more house points and fewer behaviour points.
- Students appreciate how well their voice is listened and responded to, consistently rating this aspect highly in surveys. This has led to enhanced supervision of toilets and permission for all students to wear tailored black shorts in summer. As a result, relationships are positive. Students described their teachers as good to talk to, strongly supportive and always ready to help or answer emails.

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

... having embedded the practice of starter 'do now' activities, teachers responded to leaders' PD opportunities to improve the quality, giving consideration as to how students give their answers to ensure they complete the activity and learn from it.

...teachers checked every student's work and/or understanding to identify misconceptions, to support students who are struggling and to identify which students to cold call.

...teachers routinely used more techniques for embedding subject specific vocabulary, such as word consciousness and provided opportunities for all students to demonstrate usage at the point of acquisition.



'Leaders, including governors, invest in staff to provide support for the most vulnerable students and work with their families.'

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

- Leaders, including governors, invest in staff to provide support for the most vulnerable students and to work with their families. Examples in the last year include the recruitment of an attendance and intervention manager and a higher level teaching assistant.
- Early preparation leads to effective Key Stage 3 provision for the most vulnerable students. Following meetings with feeder schools and parents, Year 6 students with SEND attend Springfield's summer school to ensure their smooth transition.
- To help students access their learning, leaders provide a range of resource supports. This includes coloured overlays, laptops, show-me boards and learning support assistants. Teachers provide scaffolds to support writing tasks, such as sentence frames and starters.
- Leaders track the progress and attendance of disadvantaged students to work with them and their parents to remove barriers. Tutors phone, using a set script, to set up a personal connection and discuss issues. If issues still arise, the intervention manager takes over. Additional evenings for parents, the use of rewards, such as attendance to a special programme, and a free breakfast club has helped improve attendance rates. Leaders' commitment is exemplified by: their role with the Department for Education as an attendance mentor school; the students they accept with attendance rates below 10%; and the low number of students electing home education compared to other schools in Portsmouth.
- As a result of vulnerable student voice, leaders have expanded the opportunities for them to take on leadership roles, recently adding mental health and anti-bullying ambassador roles to the school committees. These students are very proud of how their role helps others, evidenced by the large number of students who responded to their survey. They shared how their role has also helped them improve their confidence after speaking in assemblies. As well as the diversity and inclusion club, the break and lunch club rules have been co-constructed with students with SEND. In particular, these students gave a strong input into the design of the new sensory room which provides an invaluable safe space for students to calm down and return to their learning.
- As a result of leaders' actions, attendance rates and results in national examinations are improving for disadvantaged students and for those with SEND.

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

... leaders used quantifiable measures to assess the impact of student interventions and shared this with teachers to incorporate into their lesson plans.



'In one year, the Careers Lead has secured rapid improvement to achieve a high-quality provision with extensive employer encounters across several year groups...'

5. Area of Excellence - Careers Provision

How to rapidly improve careers provision in one year to meet or excel in the Gatsby Benchmarks

Accredited

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

Following the appointment of the Careers Leader, leaders at all levels put a high value on careers education for their students. As a result, careers education and guidance are key strengths of the school. The Challenge Partners review team in 2024 suggested that the school apply for an area of excellence.

In one year, the careers leader has secured rapid improvement to achieve a high quality provision with extensive employer encounters across several year groups. This is combined with an ambitious vision for further improvements resourced with leadership support. The fact that leaders funded the careers leader to achieve her level 7 careers leader qualification during this time, exemplifies the vision.

In addition to senior leadership support, many staff and other levels of leaders, such as heads of year, the SENCo and the inclusion lead, implement and enhance the programme as a cohesive team, leading to strong student outcomes.

Despite being an 11-16 school, students are well versed and confident about their options both post-16 and post-18. Students of all groups and ages recall and reel off a range of next step related activities. These include links with Kings College for dental and medicine, a trip to a university, local colleges coming to talk in assemblies augmented with a trip to a local college, and assemblies on understanding apprenticeships. Year 11 students benefit from 'sixth form week' in school where students can select A level taster lessons from a variety of new and known subjects.

Likewise, students list an impressive range of careers related activities that they recall effortlessly. These include the Year 8 in school careers day, that construction is an in demand local employment sector, a Women in Law event, an aviation expert, an ex-police officer now working in civil security, a Year 11 trip to a careers fair at the Guild Hall, an i-construct trip and routine elective after school trips to a range of employer organisations. The after-school trips is a good example of how staff attitude enhances the provision because many staff volunteer to take students. All students value their Year 10 work experience as well as their personalised career guidance before and after the provision.



'Springfield students have high aspirations and confidence for their short term and long term futures.'

The Careers Leader's plans include how to ensure sustained expertise in careers education. The programme is currently transitioning from being opportunity led to being student responsive based on direct knowledge of each student's changing interests and skills. She will soon begin the ongoing staff development programme to help all subject leaders ensure that their plans show how subject content links to the real world and how the skills developed help more effective working practices in a range of careers and work practices. Using her employer engagement programme, the leader will model the implementation on that embedding within the core subjects of English and mathematics. Students recalled employers visiting mathematics lessons to talk about how algebra linked to their work in vaccine production. Similarly, following a visit from a wealth management advisor about how compound interest relates to their clients, mathematics teachers used examples linked to mortgage and savings rates to show the effect on the principle when compounding interest rates. In English lessons, students learn about how artificial intelligence (AI) is increasing in employee selection processes, asking students to justify their selection from human written or AI generated curriculum vitae and letters of application. Another lesson teaches students the STAR (situation, technique, assess, review) interview technique. Other subjects have already taken part by showing how specialising in their subject might lead to a career, such as a professional musician speaking to students in their music class.

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

Springfield students have high aspirations and confidence for their short term and long term futures. As well as benefitting from starting to think about possible future careers, students from as early as Year 8 also recognise how their learning improves their future options. For example, many students spoke about how they needed to improve their confidence and public speaking skills. Others were able to list their strengths in employment skills.

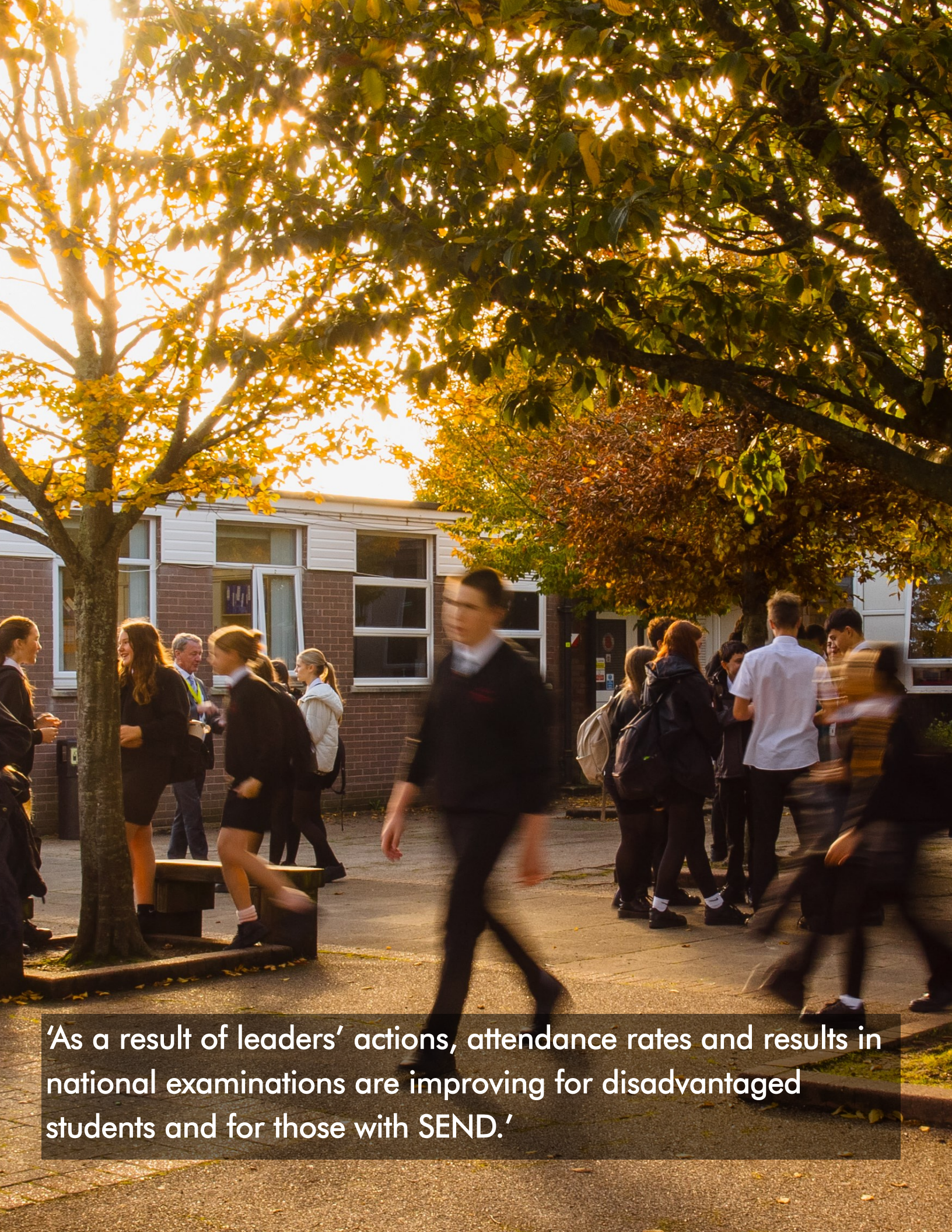
The Year 9 students selected for the Brilliant Club benefit in many ways, such as confidence in their independent learning skills. With the current cohort, their aspirations to attend university have moved from 50% to 100%. One student has progressed from being shy to understanding her strengths. Everyone is proud of how she was recently published in the Scholar magazine, an academic journal of outstanding student work.

The curriculum design enables individual pathways for students to access learning in school so that all students leave with a qualification appropriate to their needs, such as ASDAN and entry level functional skills.

Due to the strong teamwork and targeted support and activities for vulnerable students, all students are inspired and supported to find their next stage of education, employment or training. As a result, not only have students' sustained destination outcomes improved to well above the LA average, but last year over 98% entered education, employment or training.

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

Name: Laura Burden
Job title: Head of Aspiration/Enterprise
Email: contact@springfield.uk.net



'As a result of leaders' actions, attendance rates and results in national examinations are improving for disadvantaged students and for those with SEND.'



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 AND Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils	Effective
Area of excellence	Accredited
Previously accredited valid areas of excellence	Not applicable
Overall peer evaluation estimate	Effective

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.

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.



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