



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR SARACENS HIGH SCHOOL

Name of School:	Saracens High School
Headteacher/Principal:	Dr. Matthew Stevens
Hub:	Compton Hub
School phase:	11-18 (Free School)
MAT (if applicable):	Saracens Multi-Academy Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	N/A
Date of this Review:	27/01/2025
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	N/A
Date of last QA Review	N/A
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	24/05/2022

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 pupils with additional needs

Area of excellence Not submitted for this review.

Previously accredited valid areas of excellence N/A

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

Saracens High School is a growing secondary academy, now in its seventh year of operations. Over half of its students are disadvantaged, well above the national average and a reflection of some of the challenges of the local community, which include gang culture. It is the founder school of the Saracens Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) under the auspices of the Saracens rugby club. This consists of two additional primary schools, also located in the borough of Barnet. The school received its first published results at GCSE in 2023. Leaders are awaiting their first Year 13 results this summer.

The number of students who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is significantly above local and national averages. This is also true of the proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), where nearly a fifth receive support. Those with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) are above average. About two fifths of students are from Black African, White British, Afghan or White European heritage, the rest from a wide range of ethnicities. The school shares the aspirational values of sport but underpins these with straightforward expectations. The school intends for its students to be ready, respectful and safe and not afraid to make mistakes.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Leaders focus first and foremost on embedding the school's core values of hard work, discipline, honesty and humility. In doing so, they seek to educate in the widest sense. Students confirm that teachers promote these values through their words and actions. A Year 10 student explained that "the values are implemented in our daily lives, both inside and outside of school so that we carry them beyond".
- Leaders show moral leadership in their construction of the curriculum. They give high priority to the building of social and cultural capital. They consider it vital that all students in all years, including Year 11, are exposed to the wide range of opportunities available in the enrichment programme. For this reason, a two-year Key Stage 3 is in operation, with GCSEs starting at the beginning of Year 9.
- The school is committed to developing staff through research-based training. Significant time is devoted to developing the school's teaching and learning capability. The seven "pillars" of its teaching and learning strategy form the basis of the extensive provision of continuing professional development (CPD). Sessions are led by a wide range of staff, including those in their early career.
- Leaders nurture a sophisticated approach to teaching and learning. They develop effective implementation of lesson phases, not just beginnings and ends, but the "learning pit" when knowledge acquisition and understanding occur.

- A wide range of middle and senior leaders play their part in embedding policies on teaching, learning and behaviour. Pastoral leaders provide strong support to disadvantaged students and their families. This includes removing barriers to education by embedding daily routines and wide-ranging interventions for those most at risk of suspension or high rates of absence.
- A healthy climate for learning pervades the school, primarily because of leaders' commitment to disruption-free learning. They express a strong sense of common purpose in their management of student behaviour. They fully support the three "Rs" of "reminder, reset, reparation". The approach is schoolwide with opportunities taken in training, assemblies and tutorial time to rehearse expectations and consequences. The number of suspensions has reduced by over a half since the policy was launched earlier this year.
- Numerous murals in the central atrium and the corridors radiating from it convey important messages about personal values and career possibilities. Thought-provoking extracts from influential works of literature help amplify these. Assembly content also emphasises that "culture and character" are the "Saracens' Way". In a Year 9 assembly one of the houses presented to the rest of the year group on its rich ethnic diversity. The atmosphere of mutual respect between presenters and audience was impressive.
- The sixth form is well led and continues the emphasis on values and expectations from lower down in the school. There are three distinct pathways available to students: A-level, T-level and pre-apprenticeship. Leaders work hard to ensure that the pathway matches the student's academic profile and career aspirations.

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

- ... the principles of disruption free learning, both in tutor time ("learning group") and in lessons, were applied equally effectively by all staff.
- ... the school shared its approaches to creating a successful values-based culture with a wider range of schools.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Teachers focus on embedding the quality of students' disciplinary knowledge. In a Year 12 mathematics (GCSE resit) lesson, students were instructed to "improve their answer" by using subject-specific language. In GCSE history, students are taught how to "write like a historian...". This reinforces students' literacy skills and understanding of the essence of the subject.
- Practice in classrooms reflects whole school initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The schoolwide initiative on "silent do nows" fosters a purposeful start to lessons and encourages students to recall prior learning. In a Year 12 Spanish lesson, students were highly engaged, speaking the

target language and fulfilling the teacher's academic and behavioural expectations.

- Structured talk is planned for in a way that develops skills in oracy. In Year 12 mathematics, students were encouraged to repeat their answers again, but more clearly. The teacher patiently coaxed a more detailed verbal response to emerge. This leads to students acquiring high level disciplinary language and confidently explaining their work to others.
- Opportunities for learning in personal development and wider enrichment are numerous. Assemblies are thematic, commencing with "personal histories" in September, then cycling through black history month, remembrance and disability-equality through the rest of the first term. Radiating from this core offer is a host of other activities, including "creative arts week", "making memories" every half term and a "together we create" arts festival.
- Sixth form students receive pastoral support through their "seminar tutor". They also work closely with their tutor to rectify any gaps in learning. The policy of yellow notebooks for all "do now" activities enables tutor and student to identify quickly where there might be a blind spot.
- Sixth form teachers display excellent subject knowledge. In a Year 13 economics lesson, teaching focussed on examination technique for mini-essay questions and identified gaps in student knowledge. In Year 12 history, high level peer dialogue was seen, with follow-up use of mini whiteboards to check understanding. The teacher then developed knowledge further by use of the visualiser, exemplifying a healthy collaborative approach towards teaching at this level.
- Expectations of behaviour are high. Systems to promote "disruption-free learning" are largely effective. Poor behaviour is dealt with on a restorative basis. Positive role modelling by other students and staff however is prominent. The appointment of "lead greeters" in each class to welcome visitors to lessons, explain the context and share written work is highly effective.
- Reading is valued by the school and a generous allocation of time and resources symbolises this. All students read together three times a week and staff are trained and supported to model excellent reading in these sessions. The choice of texts is judicious and scrupulously planned. Students in Year 7 and 8 groups spoke confidently about the value of reading and their enjoyment of reading together.
- The school's aspirations for its students as citizens are matched by student outcomes. These are strong and support leaders' rationale for the structure of the curriculum. The progress students make is above average. The performance of low prior attainment (LPA) students, whose progress standards are nearly three-quarters of a grade above zero, is notably strong.
- Attendance last academic year stood above the national average and remains strong. With the implementation of structural changes to support the area further, persistent absence has reduced significantly to half the national

average. Adjustments have included the appointment of key support staff roles focussed on attendance and family/school relationships.

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

- ... the school's practices in both formative and summative assessment were more securely embedded.
- ... opportunities for discussion between students in class were more frequent.
- ... quality assurance in the sixth form focussed on the implementation of "do nows" and work scrutiny.

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

- The special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) and her team have a firm grasp of the range of needs of their students and the support strategies required. The management information system is fully populated with key data, including reading ages, and regularly updated with changes to profiles of or details of in year admissions. This means teaching can be adapted appropriately.
- Students speak with pride about the guidance and support they receive. The "grow and thrive" department is a base for effective intervention for students with specific needs. Students commented positively on their personal experience of one-to-one support, counselling and speech, language and communication interventions. One such student reported that "teachers really care, and no-one's left behind with their learning".
- GCSE outcomes for disadvantaged students are significantly above national averages. Students with EAL progress at a greater rate than their non-EAL peers. The proportion of disadvantaged students achieving GCSEs at grade 5 is greater than the national average for all students. This illustrates the effectiveness of whole school and in-class strategies for disadvantaged students.
- Aside from ensuring that all students "live the values", the promotion of reading is an article of faith. The school aspires for every student to read at their chronological reading age. It screens for the weakest readers needing phonics intervention on entry in Year 7, through to Year 11, where comprehension might be more the issue.
- Early liaison with primary feeder schools and strong family relationships are a significant factor in supporting all disadvantaged students, especially those

with SEND. In addition to conventional data-gathering at transition, the school organises an annual summer school specifically for incoming Year 7 students. This particularly helps early analysis of SEND and other pastoral information.

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

- ... quality assurance systems focussed more intensively on the implementation of in-class adaptations implied by SEND profiles and other data.
- ... systems for the early identification of SEND needs were more secure and mechanisms were in place for interim support pending formal diagnosis.

5. Area of Excellence

Not submitted for this review.

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 hub networks 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 network 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



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report (<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit>)