



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR SOAR VALLEY COLLEGE

Name of School:	Soar Valley College
Headteacher/Principal:	Julie Robinson
Hub:	East Midland South Hub
School phase:	Secondary
MAT (if applicable):	N/A

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	18/11/2022
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Leading
Date of last QA Review	13/03/2020
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	07/11/2014



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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
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Quality of provision and outcomes	Leading
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AND

**Quality of provision and
outcomes for disadvantaged
pupils and pupils with additional
needs**

Area of excellence	Not applicable
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Previously accredited valid areas of excellence	Extra-curricular provision and mathematics, 10/11/2014
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Overall peer evaluation estimate	Leading
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***The Quality Assurance Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades.
The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is
developmental not judgmental.***

1. Context and character of the school

Soar Valley is a larger than average-sized secondary college. The majority of students are from an Indian heritage background. Most students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for the student premium is above the national average. There are very few looked-after children. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is close to the national average. Those with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) is below average. There are six students in the main college educated off-site and one dually registered. Students attend different venues and organisations, including One Care, Transform, FSD Academy (sport), Pedestrian (music/business), E2 (hospitality and catering) and Car Works. The college motto is 'Aspire, Enjoy, Achieve', where "every individual is encouraged and supported to do the best they can do, and to be the best they can be".

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The principal inspires and empowers her staff and students to realise their potential. She has the highest expectations of everyone within the college community and leads with both rigour and humanity.
- Strong leadership at all levels is a hallmark of the college. The principal is ably supported by a very strong team of senior leaders. Highly effective leadership from middle leaders means that subject areas are well-run and high achieving.
- Leaders at all levels contribute to the strong systems in place. They are quick to identify any areas of underperformance and deal with these effectively. The college's view of its own performance is robust and accurate. A constantly evolving professional development model ensures that teachers are reflective and driven in their desire to improve.
- Subject leaders have created detailed curriculum plans across a range of subjects. These plans identify the most important knowledge that students need to learn, and when. This helps students to build on what they already know. This was apparent in all lessons visited where students could articulate the sequencing of the curriculum: "During the recap, I can review what I know about my subject. It gives me confidence to tackle what will come next".
- A culture of respect is tangible. It is evident in the way that all members of the college community interact with one another, the *Soar Valley Way*: "Soar Valley College is diverse. Everybody is different but we are all part of the same community" - Year 11 student. There is a range of leadership opportunities for students such as the Anti-Bullying Ambassadors. This was apparent during a Year 10 Assembly led by some students. Consequently, incidents of bullying are rare.

- Leaders ensure that all students benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum, which meets their individual needs and helps them to be successful. The curriculum at Soar Valley College is as much about the development of students' character, values and skills as it is their academic achievement. Participation rates in the wide range of extra-curricular activities are rapidly improving post covid. All is tracked on a participation passport.
- At Key Stage 3, students follow the national curriculum and a broad range of subjects. At Key Stage 4, students have access to both academic and vocational qualifications, including The Ebacc. Almost all students progress to further education, employment or training. A strong literacy and oracy culture focused on vocabulary building has been developed across the college.
- Students want to attend school and benefit from this very positive learning environment. It is therefore not surprising that the overall absence and persistent absence figures are well below national averages.
- Governors know the college well. Both governors and leaders value the staff's commitment whilst also considering their well-being. Staff appreciate leaders' high regard for their workload.
- The college is the hub school for mathematics, arts and science within the Leicester Education Improvement Partnership. It is also supporting other schools with SEND. It supports a developing local school which requires improvement, with demonstrable impact. The college is a partner of the Leicester Teaching School Alliance and has facilitated the Challenge Partners *Growing the Top* programme.

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

... leaders further developed disciplinary literacy across all subjects.

... leaders refined their key documents to reflect their forensic approach to school improvement.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- All students behave extremely well. They are courteous and welcoming. They relate to each other, staff and visitors in a respectful, kind and friendly manner. These positive learning behaviours have clearly been developed over time and are firmly embedded.
- All students have excellent attitudes to learning. In almost all lessons observed, they show genuine engagement and real enthusiasm. During learning conversations, they eagerly help each other in a truly cooperative way: "Positive relationships elevate our understanding and push us to do better". Key Stage 4 student.

- Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subjects that they teach. They benefit from effective subject-specific training retaining some autonomy, which allows them to target both personal and departmental specific needs. This training helps them to deliver the intended curriculum well. For example, understanding and using subject-specific vocabulary is an expectation in all curriculum areas. This was apparent in a Year 10 science lesson where students were able to use complex vocabulary such as *exothermic* and *endothermic* when describing both processes.
- Teachers use their expertise and passion for their subjects to engage and enthuse students in their learning. In a Year 10 middle ability group mathematics lesson, students were learning about areas of sectors and lengths of arcs. Multiple learning strategies and rapid pace led to high levels of engagement.
- Recall was a common feature of lessons. Starter activities were used skilfully in a range of subjects to enable students to retrieve recent and long-term prior knowledge. Skilful questioning probes students' understanding and deepens their thinking. For example in Year 9 art, targeted questions such as "What have we been learning about patterns and tones?" allowed students to recall prior knowledge before expanding it.
- Teachers use regular checks in lessons to identify students' gaps in knowledge and misconceptions from the taught curriculum. Teachers use this information effectively to help students to overcome their misunderstandings. There are effective and consistent methods of assessment across all subjects that students understand clearly. Students know the levels they are working at, and, more importantly, what they need to do to make further progress. In the vast majority of cases, students receive high-quality written feedback.
- During *Soar Time*, the use of formative assessment, including live feedback, is very well embedded. Low stakes assessments allow teachers to identify gaps in knowledge and address misconceptions rapidly. Mini white boards and visualizers are used effectively to rehearse and model high quality responses: "SOAR time during lessons is used to develop your explanations and allows you to know how to improve" (Key Stage 3 students), "In lessons we SOAR it" (Key Stage 3 students).
- There are high expectations of students, and they respond accordingly, producing a high standard of work. This is very apparent in books where all students take great care of their work following the "Pride in our Work" expectations.

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

... in a few lessons, teachers used effective strategies to allow students to remember more.

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

- The special educational needs coordinator (SENDCo) has highly effective systems in place to identify the needs of students with SEND (colour coded system). The SENDCo provides staff with detailed but concise information about how to support these students well. Well-trained, experienced and dedicated teaching assistants carefully help students with SEND to access the curriculum: "Communicating with staff before lessons is important for our bespoke interventions to have an impact".
- Students who have special educational needs make rapid progress. This is because they benefit from personalised provision that meets their specific needs. Ensuring that these students do well is a high priority for all members of staff. This was apparent in all lessons visited. All students are supported very effectively in their transition from primary school and when they progress to post-16 education.
- Leaders are determined that disadvantaged students should achieve as well as their peers. This is testament to the philosophy of the college, which has equality of opportunity at its heart. In all lessons, these students have access to the same levels of ambition as their peers. Consequently, disadvantaged students make the same or better progress than their peers nationally and in school. The achievement of disadvantaged students is a high priority at all levels of the college, from classroom teachers through to governors.
- Students who arrive at the college with low prior attainment make strong progress as a result of appropriate support and provision. Those supported by the Year 7 literacy and numeracy interventions make accelerated progress during the early stages of their secondary education. Those students who need additional help with reading receive appropriate support to develop their phonics knowledge.
- When students attend alternative provision, robust procedures and effective communication ensure that their welfare is given the highest priority. Students who attend alternative provisions are following accredited courses that lead to qualifications which are appropriate for their ability. Their progress on the courses is tracked rigorously, and feedback and reports are provided in line with the college's systems.
- Leaders take swift and effective action to reduce the number of disadvantaged students who do not attend school regularly. Consequently, their attendance is strong and above national average. Leaders know exactly why a small number of students are not attending school regularly and have created a personalised package of support for each of them. The number of suspensions is very low.

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

... leaders further developed the provision for students who are new to English.

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

None at this time.

Following the QA Review

The review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. However, the main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities and CP will collate and analyse report content to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector each year.

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.

Schools can also attend Sharing Leading Practice events where schools showcase excellent and/or innovative practice. Sharing Leading Practice events allow school leaders with specific improvement needs to visit a school or attend an online webinar hosted by a school, with outstanding provision in that area.

Both the School Support Directory and the Shared Leading Practice events can be accessed via the Challenge Partners website.