QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR SWISS COTTAGE SCHOOL – DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH CENTRE

Name of School:	Swiss Cottage School – Development & Research Centre
Principal:	Ms Syra Sowe
Hub:	Empower
School phase:	4-19
MAT (if applicable):	Not Applicable

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	20/03/2026
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	The school chose not to use estimates
Date of last QA Review:	20/03/2025
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	21/03/2023

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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	Leading
Quality of provision and outcomes	Leading
AND	
Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with additional needs	Leading
Area of excellence	Not submitted for this review
Previously accredited valid areas of excellence	Formative Assessment and Reflective Inquiry (using EfL) Accredited; 24/06/2024
Overall peer evaluation estimate	Leading

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.

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1. Context and character of the school

Swiss Cottage School - Development & Research Centre (SCS) is a maintained special school supporting pupils with complex special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). There are currently 264 on roll from age 4 to 19, including 37 in post 16. Most come from Camden but 27 pupils are from neighbouring boroughs. All pupils who join the school have an education, health and care plan (EHCP). Nearly three quarters of pupils have a diagnosis of autism with a high number having comorbid diagnoses, alongside health and medical needs.

Two thirds of its pupils are disadvantaged. A small number of pupils are children in care. In its diverse community, 37 languages are spoken amongst families, the majority of which are also represented in the staff body. Almost half of pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL).

Pupils represent a range of ethnicities, the largest groups being Black Somalian, Bangladeshi and white British.

Since April 2026, a new principal has been appointed and a number of changes in the senior leadership team have been put in place.

The school's work is underpinned by its 'Inclusive, Nurturing and Inspiring' values.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Swiss Cottage school's (SCS) shared values as a Rights Respecting school permeate all aspects of its work, underpinning the high quality of its 'can do' culture, relationships, provision and outcomes. Older pupils described 'being responsible and feeling safe' and affirmed, 'the school makes me feel happy'.
- Governors know the school well through comprehensive reporting, presentations and emersion days. One governor shared their foci this year on developing leaders and the impact of the White Paper.
- Led by the passionate principal who brings significant experience to the role, senior leadership team (SLT) members have undertaken a thorough review of their responsibilities since April. Although some are new to senior leadership, their inter-dependent roles are clear and understood by all staff.
- Middle leaders, including those promoted this year, are aware of their responsibilities for subjects or other aspects of provision. They shared how they lead planning, monitor impact and provide feedback to teachers.
- Regular professional development ensures staff skills match pupils' needs. Along with SCS training, teachers can gain National Professional Qualifications or pursue higher degrees. Participating in the 'Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants' (TA) programme has enhanced the impact of

TAs' work. Scheduled 'Reflective Inquiry' meetings that start and end each day engage teachers and TAs in preparing to meet pupils' changing needs.

- Succession planning is predicated on talent spotting, training and bespoke coaching at all levels to create leaders of the future. Consequently, teaching assistants have become HLTAs or gained teacher status and teachers have been promoted into middle or senior leadership positions.
- SCS contributes significantly to enhancing education quality and influencing decision making beyond the school. Amongst the vast range of its work, staff lead workshops for middle and senior leaders; sit on a number of advisory boards such as the Schools Led Inclusion Group and the Youth Advisory Board; and, regularly input to conferences nationally and internationally.
- Leaders successfully prepare pupils for their lives after SCS and rigorously track their destinations, as reflected in SCS's gold quality mark for careers. In a Sapphire Life Skills lessons, for example, pupils in used Job Cards to follow the steps needed in a cooking lesson. As part of the transition arrangements, pupils visit Post 16 colleges and create their own CVs. There are no NEETs.
- Pupils enjoy a range of opportunities to develop autonomy and choice through extracurricular activities such as through horse riding and clay clubs, orchestral visits or the Schools Shakespeare Festival. As School Council members they develop leadership skills in representing their peers, making decisions about trips, or planning school events.
- There is a clear focus on staff Well-Being that supports the school's trauma informed practice. A comprehensive Well Being framework developed with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) defines universal, targeted and specialised levels of Well-Being support and care that are used to identify and meet pupils' needs.

2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if…

… leaders ensured the impact of changes to the senior and middle leadership teams that have been successfully developed in the last year were evaluated as part of the annual cycle with a view to upcoming local and national reform.

… leaders built on their leading practice by enhancing the evidence of SCS's longitudinal impact and influence in raising the quality of education beyond Swiss Cottage.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- The school's clear curriculum rationale focusses on developing key skills that equip pupils for life beyond the school. Provision matches pupils' needs through five curriculum pathways. Amethyst's 'encounter and discover' pathway encompasses the Early Learning Goals for the youngest children.

Emerald and Pearl offer bespoke 'Life-Skills' or 'Functional Skills' pathways respectively from Key Stage 1 to 4. The Ruby 'Connecting and Responding' pathway supports pupils with the most complex needs and the Sapphire pathway focusses on preparation for adulthood.

- Provision planning is flexible, enabling pupils to move flexibly between pathways, depending on the level at which they are working. The whole school timetable supports this flexibility, for example, by scheduling, 'communication' at the same time for all pupils.
- Underpinning the five pathways, subject development plans support teachers well in planning lessons. The music development plan, for example, describes provision overall, the use of technologies, such as switch technology, and identifies a range of opportunities pupils have to access music outside school.
- Expectations are high and communicated explicitly. Personal Learning Intention Maps based on EHCP information set out each pupil's individual needs. Displayed in classrooms, these capture pupils' key stimuli, strategies that support them, sensory preferences and de-escalation strategies. Similarly, a bespoke 'Classroom Agreement' informs TAs in supporting learning and leaders in monitoring the quality of provision.
- Assessments are rigorous and robust. In Amethyst, baseline assessment includes consideration of each pupil's EHCP long term targets along with information arising from close liaison with parents, learning walks and 'Evidence for Learning' records. Supporting pupils who join later, SCS staff visit their previous schools as part of transition planning and a comprehensive handover process.
- Robust, on-going tracking of standards is highly effective in maintaining the quality of provision, securing improved outcomes and supporting teacher retention. Daily scheduled time in teams enables teachers and TAs to focus on planning, targeted training, cross class collaboration, staff briefings and reflective enquiry. Following SCS's Leadership Team Handbook, senior and middle leaders adopt a GROW approach in monitoring staff **G**oals, reflecting on the **R**eality of current provision, considering **O**ptions for improvement and identifying the **W**ay forward.
- Reading is prioritised across the school. Little Wandle Phonics to support pupils' understanding of letters and sound is effectively embedded. Lunchtime clubs encourage reading outside lessons. Parent coffee mornings include workshops on Augmentative and Alternative Communication, symbol reading and key language.
- Teachers structure lessons well and chose stimulating props and resources to engage pupils fully. In Bluebell class (EYFS/Key Stage 1, Amethyst) pupils responded enthusiastically by following or tracking a bubble lawn mower that enabled them to stay focused during the story and develop their listening and attention skills.

- Well focussed questioning in lessons enables staff to identify how well pupils have learned and make adjustments to address misunderstanding. In Malala class (Pearl, Key Stage 4), staff provided valuable support for small groups of pupils in a literacy lesson based on instructions. They asked purposeful questions which encouraged pupils to re-think their initial responses and processes. One pupil was able to get the correct answer after a series of questions that allowed him to re-think his initial answer.
- Most pupils attend school regularly. Attendance levels are very close to national averages. Data show a four year upward trend with no difference for disadvantaged pupils. Unauthorised absences have decreased significantly in the same period.
- Pupils achieve well. Outcomes show most make strong progress from their starting points on entry. The school's comprehensive reviews based on a range of quantitative data affirm that the school closes any gaps between different groups created by disadvantage.

3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if…

… None identified.

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

- There is clear and coherent leadership of provision for the school's most complex SEND pupils. The assistant principal responsible for the Ruby pathway works closely with all other members of the senior team, middle leaders and staff directly involved in the pathway, and multi-disciplinary teams concerned.
- Close working links with the integrated multi-agency support team enhances the professional learning community for staff and provision for all pupils at SCS including those with the most complex needs. Scheduled discussions with the team on two days weekly, help leaders in navigating the services available including referral pathways, eligibility criteria and processes for accessing specialist services, and identify risks at the earliest stage possible to enable more effective interventions.
- Leaders have developed three-tiers of Positive Behaviour Support Provision that are used effectively to identify and support pupils whose behaviours affect their outcomes. The vast majority of pupils benefit from 'Universal' whole school or class provision which includes developing sensory regulation strategies, using trauma informed practice and a total communication approach. A tenth of pupils gain additional 'Specialist' support through the

school's Wellbeing and multi-disciplinary team including behaviour and social, emotional and mental health interventions whilst targeted interventions are provided for a small proportion of pupils following referrals to CAMHS.

- There is a clear structure in place to ensure support for all pupils is well targeted. Teaching assistants provide on-going support for learners who need it within classrooms. One-to-one interventions to help improve reading skills, for example, are provided outside lessons. Data show these have a positive impact in securing student achievement.
- A rich range of resources are used successfully to engage pupils with the most complex needs in order to enable them to access learning. In Benjamin Zephaniah class (Key Stage 3/4 Ruby), staff used material to play a game that encouraged individual pupils to imagine changing physical conditions then use a switch box to decide whether they wanted to continue to play or opt out.
- Constructive relationships between adults and pupils enhance learning at the school. In Benjamin Zephaniah class (Key Stage 3/4 Ruby), staff made sure that all pupils felt supported and ready to learn and attempt the learning at their own pace. All pupils were able to complete their tasks with support from their adults.

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

… None identified

5. Area of Excellence

None 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 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)