



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR JUNIPER HILL SCHOOL

Name of School:	Juniper Hill School
Headteacher/Principal:	Claire Garnett
Hub:	Aylesbury Vale Hub
School phase:	Primary
MAT (if applicable):	Not Applicable

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	20/04/2026
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	Leading
Date of last QA Review:	22/01/2025
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	'Good' across all judgement areas.
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	05/07/2022



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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

Juniper Hill School lies hidden at the bottom of a quiet cul-de-sac in a village in the Chiltern Hills, Buckinghamshire. Its quiet single-storey frontage hides a hive of industry in the acquisition of knowledge and community spirit that matches the best schools in the country.

The school's 432 pupils are supported by a staff team and community volunteer team that fully understand that they are the changemakers when it comes to ensuring that their pupils have a rock-solid foundation in education.

The pupils, quite rightly, love their school, and this is shown where attendance outstrips the national and regional averages, persistent absence is half the national average, and attainment data across the board is higher than the collective national metrics.

The number of pupils on the special educational needs register is lower than national averages, as is the number of pupils who receive free school meals. The number of pupils with English as a second language is three times less than the national average. The school has an additionally resourced provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.

None of this is achieved by accident, but through research-led, evidence-based pedagogy that matches the learning potential of the cohort. As one pupil explained, '[At Juniper Hill] They let you be everything you want to be. Teachers help you to be the best you!'

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The leadership at the school is incredibly stable, committed to the school's core values and vision. For example, one of the governors started teaching at the school following its opening in 1968, and is still leading a life of diligent service to the school's wider community. As a custodian of the school's lived experience, they follow the values of 'Kindness, Enjoyment and Achievement'. With leaders who are committed to the long-term development of their community, the school has an enhanced level of stability, providing the best that the world of education can bring.
- Leaders at Juniper Hill have a deep understanding of the need to provide high-quality lines of communication across the wider school community, and are always looking for a way to improve this. Recently, pupils were sharing with their teachers how their grandparents always had an opinion on schools today, but did not necessarily understand what modern schools were like.

Hearing this, the leadership team and the Juniper Hill Cabinet, made up of a chair who is the 'prime minister', and ministers for key areas, like friendship or teaching and learning, have developed 'Grandparents Day', an opportunity for grandparents to come into school, have an initial chat, then join lessons from history to Forest Schools, and even take part in 'show and tell' about their life experiences. And the amazing thing? On the first day 80 grandparents came, only for more to join at subsequent events. This clearly exceptional practice builds the nuanced links, binding the community together, across the generations.

- Leaders at Juniper Hill have made a conscious decision to follow a pedagogical model using 'Kagan Structures'. The Kagan methodology enables the teacher to build a structure that is chosen for a purpose within learning. For example, a structure for generating ideas, a structure for retrieval, or a structure for mathematical procedure. The subject content may come from another format, for example, *White Rose* mathematics, but ensuring Kagan is the vehicle for the learning. Teachers have fully bought into this model. In class, pupils totally understand the structures being used, which provide a continuous model that supports all, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). With fidelity to an evidence-based and research-led methodology, such as Kagan, pupils have security in their learning, and are practising the highest levels of interdependence and cooperative learning, with their classmates from Reception through to Year 6.
- The headteacher's enthusiasm for excellence, alongside enjoyment, is truly infectious. For example, following work with The Chiltern Rangers and the Butterfly Conservation Trust, the school set about planting year group planters, to help common species of butterflies to thrive, alongside growing cowslips for the Year 6 rare butterfly, 'The Duke of Burgundy'. News of this spread to the BBC, and last week a group of 15, Year 6 pupils filmed a piece for Countryfile, explaining their conservation work and the importance of their 'Butterfly Curriculum'.

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

...leaders took their deep understanding of sharing the great work of the school, and supercharged this, so that any visiting third party is in no doubt of just how exceptional the school is.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- The school goes above and beyond to support children entering the school in the early years foundation stage (EYFS) who are not fully school-ready. The school has recognised the growing need for providing speech and language therapy (SALT) for children post COVID-19, and has appointed a speech and language therapist (SaLT) and SaLT assistant. Children in EYFS are quickly assessed prior to entry to identify learning needs. SaLT interventions and SALT support start early in the first half-term for the greatest impact. For a recent intake, one third of children were receiving SaLT support in EYFS, but by Year 3 this had reduced to one pupil. With such great support, the percentage of children achieving a good level of development has been significantly above Buckinghamshire and National averages year-on-year.
- Pupils at Juniper Hill have exemplary focus and engagement in lessons. Clear learning objectives are explained well by the teachers, enabling pupils to understand what they are expected to do. Kagan structures ensure that all pupils are engaged, for example by using single round-robin activities in English to retrieve information such as conjunctions, adjectives and sentence openers. With pupils clearly engaged in all parts of the lesson, they are able to work independently, supported by clear expectations, scaffolding and modelling. With this level of quality-first teaching and engagement, pupils achieve the learning objective, and their confidence grows.
- Juniper Hill is a school which is bucking the trend for the relationships that the school builds with its families. Often, within the national dialogue, teaching professionals find that aspirational parents and carers can be very challenging, and teaching professionals are wary of drawing complaints. This is not the case at Juniper Hill. Parents and carers raising concerns are always invited into the school to talk through their worries, and are often coached on how they can help solve the issue, alongside school staff. In one example, this has led to a parent becoming a dynamic school governor, who now has their sights set on developing their impact even further. Complaints are minimised, the community is working in harmony, and aspiration is harnessed to drive the school forward.
- Juniper Hill has an extensive and well-used forest school area, where trained specialists develop pupils' progressive skills in the woodland that includes bird boxes, a pond, a fire pit, den building, mud kitchens and a 'climbing tree'. The pupils love this, as one pupil explained, 'We get to come out and do this! (jumping into a very muddy puddle)'. Staff can see the thrill of engagement that the pupils have, and tap into this. For example, starting with Reception children toasting brioche and graduating to smores, popcorn, bananas and chocolate, and finally in Year 6, lighting a fire independently, and cooking a meal. This brilliant resource ensures that pupils have the opportunity to take controlled risks and learn how to make the most of being in natural environments.

- The decision to increase exposure to a range of artists has further enhanced this area of the school's work. Work in pupils' art books demonstrates clear progression over time, with evidence of a wide range of artists being taught. Pupils have opportunities to explore and use a variety of materials, enabling experimentation, and the development of key artistic skills. As a result, pupils build on prior learning and develop their knowledge, techniques and confidence across different media, with books clearly reflecting a love for the subject.

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

...some work was undertaken to be fully reassured that the pupils are able to take their exceptional learning practice into learning environments that do not use Kagan structures as a pedagogical method, and continue on a trajectory of excellence in learning.

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

- In 2023, the school was successful in a bid to create an additional resourced provision built on the site of the school. This provision is for pupils who all have a primary diagnosis of social, emotional and mental health needs in their education, health and care plans and who have all had failed educational placements in the mainstream. Coming before the Department for Education's 'inclusion first' drive, this specialist provision means pupils have the opportunity to stay within their local communities, with the chance to reintegrate into the mainstream, if possible, or find a conduit into the specialist sector.
- Juniper Hill has some unusual metrics within the cohort. Taking into account the numbers of pupils who are, or have previously been looked after, alongside pupils who live in special guardianships, the school has five times the national average for this very distinct cohort. These pupils flourish at a school where every member of staff has been trained in the trauma-informed approach: playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy; where they are accepted for who they are, and the adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that they have been affected by. Pupils come to a school that is their safe haven and anchor point, where an exceptional staff team enables them to find their place in society, with parity to their classmates.
- Post-COVID-19 the school developed emotional literacy support assistants. Alongside their role as learning support assistants, these colleagues have a

caseload across the school with up to six pupils each at any one time, delivering support programmes, particularly where the pupils have been exposed to ACEs. These include family illness and bereavement. With this seasoned team in place, these 'willing volunteers' hold the most vulnerable members of the cohort safe.

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

...the school explored the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* to support the pupils to be fully prepared for life in modern multicultural Britain.

5. Area of Excellence

A well-planned, consistent, engaging, progressive writing approach that raises standards.

Accredited

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

Juniper Hill's writing approach ('I am a Clever Writer' (IACW)) is a powerful, structured approach equipping pupils and teachers with the tools to succeed. Used from EYFS to Year 6, it ensures clear progression across skills and genres, promoting high expectations, inclusivity, and strong outcomes for all.

As an initial research school, Juniper Hill had 18 months of research support from the designers of the model, meaning the school became fully embedded in the methodology, linking its use to increasing writing outcomes, year-on-year.

Juniper Hill is fully committed to developing teachers' subject knowledge. Through regular collaboration with IACW facilitators, it has ensured staff possess the expertise required to deliver ambitious, engaging lessons.

The challenge of new staff is addressed through targeted investment in high-quality training through refresher courses. EYFS staff receive specialised training to ensure

a seamless transition into Key Stage 1. This approach in EYFS establishes strong foundations from the outset, underpinned by clear modelling and consistently high expectations.

Staff develop an understanding of effective practice through ongoing training and feedback, including the careful sequencing of skills, adaptive challenge, the reduction of cognitive overload, and a clear approach to writing instruction—all of which drive pupil success.

The writing Lead, as a trained moderator, ensures staff are confident and accurate in their assessments, and any updates to moderation practices are communicated clearly and efficiently.

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

Implemented in 2021, Juniper Hill was part of the original IACW cohort of research schools. Prior to this, 2021 writing levels were consistently below the national and regional standards.

This approach, year on year, has improved writing outcomes for all, for example, with the current Year 6 teacher assessment at 82% expected (March 2026).

The school has developed clear progression in both genres and skills documents, and assessment grids to track progress. Lessons are carefully constructed to model, practise and apply writing skills, through a range of genres. Live feedback is used to improve final pieces.

All pupils, including those with SEND, make rapid progress. High expectations drive standards and engagement. Pupils, including the most vulnerable, feel confident to write. Teachers testify that a shared planning methodology reduces workload, while reporting that a consistent approach improves teachers' confidence.

Speaking to pupils, they explain that report writing is their favourite subject. They love to write and are proud of their written work.

IACW has secured sustained improvement, created confidence and consistency in writing for teachers and pupils through implementation that is evidence-based and research-led.

Through regular collaboration with IACW facilitators, the school has ensured staff possess the expertise required to deliver ambitious, engaging lessons.

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

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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>)