Name of School:	Stanchester Academy
Head teacher/Principal:	Amy Joynes
Hub:	Kingsbridge Hub
School type:	Academy converter
MAT (if applicable):	Not applicable

Estimate at this QA Review:	GOOD
Date of this Review:	18/01/2019
Estimate at last QA Review	GOOD
Date of last QA Review	01/11/2017
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	GOOD
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	02/02/2016

Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising of host school leaders and visiting reviewers agree that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

School Improvement Strategies	OUTSTANDING
Outcomes for Pupils	GOOD
Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment	GOOD
Area of Excellence	DEVELOPING
Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence	Developing a culture of high expectations, 01/11/2017
	Continuous professional development, 01/02/2017
Overall Estimate	GOOD

Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.

1. Context and character of the school

Stanchester Academy is a smaller than average secondary school and stand-alone academy with approximately 615 students on roll. The school has capacity for 905 students and until recently enrolment had dropped to around 550. There were a variety of reasons for falling enrolment including the very wide geographic catchment area of the school, falling birth rates over a number of years and parental choice. The school has been successful in attracting new students and is currently oversubscribed with 180 students in Year 7 for 2018/19 and applications for 2019/20 are also significantly increased.

Almost all students are White British and come from a very wide, rural region with a large majority of the student body travelling in to school by bus. There are slightly more boys than girls on roll. Just under half of the students enter the school with high prior attainment which is significantly above the proportion in similar schools regionally and nationally. The school operates an open entry policy and accepts new enrolments for those that have been permanently excluded from other schools. The number of students from service families account for a small but significant cohort and the number of late starts at the school is high.

The proportion of disadvantaged students at the school is much lower than the national average as are those with identified support needs and education, health and care plans (EHCP). These proportions are in line with the local and regional figures but are rising across the south west over recent years with a further anticipated rise in the coming years. Teacher turnover is relatively low and some of the more experienced, high performing teachers have a well-established partnership with the South West Teaching School Alliance (SWTSA).

2.1 School Improvement Strategies - Progress from previous EBIs

- The school has been proactive in addressing the EBIs from the last review and these have been closed down. The EBIs at this review illustrate the continued effectiveness of the leadership team.

2.2 School Improvement Strategies - What went well

- The existing leadership team has developed and matured over the past two years and have successfully addressed the EBIs from the last review. Their proactive and open engagement with partnership networks such as the SWTSA has ensured that teaching practice at the school has been improved. Teaching is consistently good with examples of outstanding practice observed during the review.
- Middle leaders take ownership of the direction of their teams and tackle new projects that impact positively on students' experience with great vigour. They grow capacity to sustain improvements in the quality of provision in areas such as teachers use of subject vocabulary.
- Senior leaders operate a distributed leadership model that is cohesive and formed around robust improvement plans. They review the impact of improvement plans regularly. For example, the 6C's has secured improvements in students attitudes to learning resulting in the strong progress that current students make.
- The ethos of the school improvement is clear and the shared vision, that is led by the head teacher, ensures that all communications are understood and applied across school life. This vision is helping to establish the school as the number one choice for new students in the region as evidenced by the burgeoning numbers in Years 7 and 8.
- Leaders at all levels take risks but these are managed and discussed carefully to ensure that risk is spread, impact is measurable and occur in a timely manner. New practice is adopted readily such as the recently embedded Year 7 curriculum learning strategy that has significantly improved progress for this cohort of students.
- The impact of continuous professional development (CPD) to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time has resulted in a range of well embedded cultural practices. There were no examples of poor teaching observed during this review. There is a culture of self-improvement and teachers have a desire to engage with CPD across the school. Staff feel empowered to lead initiatives that are based on research such as the 'guidance time' that was established at the start of the academic day to broaden students' practice of debating.
- Leaders are agile to change and take every opportunity to explore new practice. They respond well to students' needs and have established a community feel within the locality. Leaders and teachers listen closely to parents and students. They put the student first in their personal and academic development.
- Relationships between all stakeholders is very positive and staff feel valued in their roles. They appreciate the investment in the resources, CPD and time allocated to improve all aspects of the school.
- Teaching staff have a clear understanding of their students' progress data and how to use this information within their teaching to improve the results of their students.

2.3 School Improvement Strategies - Even better if…

…leaders were able to readily and proactively utilise existing shadow data alongside case studies to provide statistics that are representative of the progress that all students make.

…the implementation of new initiatives is closely managed to ensure that they do not detract from whole school priorities such as improving the progress and attainment for disadvantaged students and those with high prior attainment.

3.1 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Progress from previous EBIs

- Whilst questioning techniques and refinement of how to consistently deepen students' knowledge remains an area of high priority at the school, teachers have addressed the EBIs from the last review and these are now closed down.

3.2 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - What went well

- Teachers use written feedback consistently well with their students regardless of their starting points. Teachers provide students with useful commentary about how to improve. For example, in Year 11 English, students acquire new and deeper learning as a response to the quality of feedback they receive.
- Students trust their teachers to work with them to inform their next steps in learning. They have confidence in the knowledge and ability of their teachers to give them the best possible academic guidance.
- Students are developing their independent study skills well. For example, in design and technology, students take responsibility for preparing their own notes, collaborate with their peers including peer assessing and benefit from self-marking their own work which is then checked by teachers.
- Students are settled into well-structured learning routines. Students respond positively to school wide strategies such as the 'ten in ten' where they start formal learning very early in the day (before 8.30 am). This time is used to establish and inform the attitudes to learning measures that the school uses to assess students' progress.
- At its best, teachers use probing and precise questioning to develop learning, such as in Spanish where timely teacher prompts move learning swiftly along including for the more able. In physical education, targeted theory questioning ensures that all students' knowledge is routinely checked before moving on to practical activities.
- Teachers use academic language consistently well across all year groups. For example, in Year 10 History, teachers use the correct terminology to reinforce key

texts and vocabulary to consolidate learning about World War II.
- The majority of students are inquisitive, eager to learn and exhibit positive behaviours for learning. Students stay consistently well focused on the task that they are given. Consequently, students across all year groups, but particularly in Years 7 and 8 make consistently good progress at the school.
- Students are resilient and take risks in their learning as a result of teachers' consistently good guidance. Students are reflective in lessons and developing their own strategies to overcome barriers to learning. For example, students in art make annotations on their work on how best to improve the quality of drawings that they produce.
- The quality of learning support and effectiveness of communication with the teacher addresses gaps in student knowledge. Learning support is often used to effectively re-engage those who need the most support and to provide targeted intervention under the guidance of the teacher.

3.3 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Even better if…

…strategies for quality home learning were more consistently established, including routine marking within departments to consolidate learning and progress.
…questioning was even further developed so that it is consistently challenging and probing to push all students to achieve their full potential and deepen learning.

4. Outcomes for Pupils

- Results in Key Stage 4 at the end of 2018 indicate Progress 8 measures for a cohort of 90 students that are much lower than the national average across most subject areas, particularly in science and open element qualifications. High prior attainers account for around thirty percent of the cohort but make the least progress compared to other groups of students. Disadvantaged students' performance is much lower than the school and national averages. There are some improvements in the progress of groups of students such as in mathematics for middle prior attainers. Humanities performs well and, although progress has dropped, is still in line with the national average.
- Current students in Key Stage 4 are making consistently good progress and there is greater rigour at key assessment points, through refined data input and targeted intervention. There are ongoing improvements to data collection and use including through the use of triangulated 'attitudes to learning' information. Current progress demonstrates that students are making at least the expected progress that they are capable of. Performance measures over time are well tracked and being constantly refined to provide even more accurate predictions for student outcomes. Whilst the school was disappointed with outcomes in 2018, predicted outcomes were surpassed as evidenced by very clear case studies for the small number of students that had a significant negative impact on outcomes. Whilst

this was made clear throughout the review, the school should consider how best to present and utilise its shadow data as an influential and illustrative measure of student progress.
● Strategies to target key groups of students such as those in lower Key Stage 3 are resulting in strong progress over time with anticipated outcomes mapped against accurate predictions. The shift to deliver a unique Year 7 and 8 curriculum has resulted in early trend analysis that illustrates current students in these year groups are making better progress compared to previous Year 7 and 8 students and to their contemporaries in Years 9 to 11. The 'attitudes to learning' strategy that the school has implemented to measure the progress of different groups of students clearly shows that gaps between disadvantaged students and other groups are starting to close more rapidly than in previous years but are still too wide.

5. Area of Excellence

Personal development / character education

Developing

5.1 How is this area developing to be a strength?

The school started a small-scale strategy based around character education and personal development approximately 18 months ago. The rationale is that if students are better prepared to face the academic rigour of school at the start of Key Stage 3 then they are more likely to sustain progress over time leading to better exam results by the time they complete their GCSEs. There is some emerging evidence in Years 7 and 8 that the redesigned curriculum that these students are making better progress than at the same point in previous years as a result of being more self-directed and prepared for the next phase of learning. However, the effectiveness of this has not yet been fully evaluated or embedded to be able to measure the substantial and sustained impact on outcomes that are anticipated.

5.2 What actions is the school taking to grow expertise in this area?

The school has started to engage with other local schools and sports clubs to share practice and build capacity outside of the school. The area of excellence has been designed based on research into character education and is built on some practice from a sport setting with clear adaptations for a whole school Year 7 and 8 curriculum. This area still needs to be defined particularly in respect of transferability and scalability.

There has been insufficient time to determine the impact on students' outcomes, but it has the potential to be an innovative curriculum approach.

5.3 What are the next steps to work towards accredited status next year?

- Ensure that the focus and title of the area of excellence is sufficiently clear in order to maximise the impact of any leadership development days that the school may choose to put forward.
- Evidence secure and substantial progress over time that is tangible and clearly attributable to this strategy.
- Evidence the impact on all ability groups of students' including disadvantaged, low, medium, high prior attainment and by gender that is convincing to an external group to add impact to any leadership development day that may run in the future.

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

The school would like to reflect on its next steps and any additional support that may be required prior to committing to support from the Challenge Partners network.

This review will support the school's continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities.