

**Public School 721 Richmond**

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# Public School 721 Richmond

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## Part 1: The School Context

### Information about the school

The Richard Hungerford School is Special Education Cluster school, serving students between the ages of 12-21 on Staten Island. All students have significant or severe disabilities and require a high level of support and specialist services. There are significantly more male than female students. The school has one main site and there are five off-site schools where students may attend full or part time. Students with profound and multiple disabilities are supported in units within these schools and wherever possible included in whole school activities.

In 2005 Hungerford staff extended the educational opportunities for students with Asperger's Syndrome by working closely with a local middle school.

Working close with parents, employers and strong community links have resulted in students making a successful graduation and to date 100% have taken up places in inclusive community placements.

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## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The leadership of the school is exceptional; the principal maintains an excellent balance between visionary leadership and attention to the day-to-day needs and demands of school management. The senior leadership team is a committed, experienced management group; their work adds great value to the school community.
- Support for and communication with, parents is excellent
- The school's success in enhancing the educational and vocational opportunities for students through community links is outstanding.
- Every effort is made to promote the school in the community and to present an accurate and positive reflection of its work. These endeavors are very successful.
- Students, parents and staff express great pride in being part of the Hungerford community of learners.
- The school is fully committed to inclusion and students benefit from the range and quality of opportunities provided, both within the Hungerford building and through inclusion in local mainstream middle and high schools.
- Staff knows the students very well and there is a highly developed culture of support for and response to the needs of each individual student.
- Students are provided with a comprehensive range of related services.
- Students who are included in full and part time courses in large high schools are still very much part of the Hungerford community. Physical, social and emotional barriers are overcome by the strong teamwork and good communication with parents, students and zone schools.
- There is innovative work developing on the use of data.
- Students are encouraged and supported to self-advocate and to support each other.
- Attendance is very high, students are well motivated, show positive attitudes and motivation.
- The curriculum is creative and interesting. Students are offered a suitable range of courses to meet the range of need, interest and age group.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue the development of work currently underway to improve the use and application of data in driving instructional practice.
- Continue the work on disaggregating data to have a clear and consistent understanding of individual and group progress. Also to sharpen the learning objectives used to assess teaching and its impact on learning.
- Develop a whole school plan for professional development, which links the identified needs of individual staff with whole school priorities.
- Improve the consistency of instruction by ensuring that all teachers are given opportunities for development, through monitoring, evaluation and sharing good practice. This will provide further opportunities for professional development and assist in the management of change through a whole school initiative.
- Develop the use of technology to ensure that all students have full access to the curriculum and have individual needs met.
- Use technology to capture stages of student learning and achievement.

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### Part 3: Main Findings

#### Overall Evaluation

**This is a well-developed school, overall.**

**How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria.**

**Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.**

**This area is well-developed.**

There are detailed systems for collecting and using data to understand what each student knows, understands and can do. A range of data is collected and used to ascertain next learning steps for each student; sources of information include teacher assessment, testing, outcomes from student work, standards-based portfolios and attendance. Every student has an Individual Education Plan where the goals and actions are recorded and through which progress is monitored.

Although there are well-established systems for collecting data, it is acknowledged that the present system needs to be developed further and standardized. Arguably, this is not a simple task given the individualized and holistic nature of progress. However, work has begun on building a system which will enable data to be collected effectively and used to more systematically track progress of individuals, groups and to understand whole-school trends.

Allied to this is the development of ways to standardize assessment and tighten the links between planning, teaching, achievement, assessment and recording. To help improve instructional planning and there are plans to use outcomes from The Brigance Tests and the New York Alternate Performance Indicators.

A standardized assessment tool which helps to gather data, use it to track student progress with more precision, assist teacher planning and instruction and sharpen IEP and other objectives is a very worthwhile next step to refine and develop instruction at individual teacher level and to help evaluate what is working well instructionally and what needs to be changed and improved.

**Quality Statement 2: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area is well-developed overall**

The school's organization is complex, not only because students are included in mainstream schools and units but also because of the wide-ranging professional support required for each individual student. Even with this complexity, there is a sense that the

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needs of each student are known and met and the requirements of Individual Education Plans are planned for, evaluated and revised suitably. Progress is carefully monitored using formal and informal measures and at the end of each marking period, the plan for each individual student is reviewed and if necessary, revised. Planning and revision of plans work at different levels IEPs and transition planning because some are in response to statutory requirements others are in-house, driven by students, parents, teachers, or therapists.

The staff knows their students well and the multi-professional team, as well as the staff who works with students in the zoned mainstream schools, are attentive to signs of student progress or regression and will make adjustments as a result. This is intensive monitoring, evaluation, re-evaluation and re-design of a learning program relies on effective team collaboration, including parents. Students are also encouraged to self-advocate and as young adults to communicate their wishes and needs.

The systems in place, at both administrative and professional level support the smooth transfer of information very effectively and the collaboration, which is essential, happens. Parents are close working partners in their child's education and the collaboration and mutual support between parents and school is a successful feature of Hungerford. Collaboration and teamwork run like a thread through the school. Parents spoke warmly of the support given to them by the principal, they appreciated her capacity to listen, respond and where possible to adapt and act on suggestions and requests. The senior management team has a clear understanding of their responsibilities and work with a shared focus and collaboration. The School Leadership Team is thriving and is a model of cooperative practice. Quite simply, given the complex learning needs of the students and the number of people involved in supporting these young people to independence and fulfillment, nothing worthwhile could be achieved without a cohesive team approach. This is evidenced in each classroom where the ratios of adult to student are high, often adults outnumber students, and the teaching, support and therapy is administered simultaneously and apparently seamlessly.

Research is used well and the adults are themselves an example of life long learners. For example, research on a program of "chair yoga" was developed and used with a group of challenging students. The program was adjusted and refined in response to student need. Staff was involved in the research and in the pilot.

**Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area is proficient with some areas for development.**

The curriculum is designed to meet the range of need, age and level of independence. It is well balanced providing a core curriculum of functional academics, which is enhanced by a very wide range of vocational and extra-curricular experiences.

Data is used to inform teacher planning and classroom practice, but this is an area for further development and work is already underway. The relationship between teaching, learning, assessment and planning is one, which at present is too dependent on the skill, experience and practice of individual teachers and it the school recognizes the need to continue to work on a school-wide system.

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Given the mobility of students between the Hungerford building, mainstream schools, work placements and therapy, a “tighter” and more uniform system of planning and assessment aligned more formally to teaching and learning is essential, particularly as new staff join the school team. The planned improved systems for tracking the progress of individuals and groups can also be used to inform the whole school planning of resources and professional development planning.

Generally, resourcing is viewed very creatively and the principal leads a team who are proactive in getting the necessary resources to ensure that student needs are met. It is quite wonderful to observe the “can do” approach to finding a way of solving a problem or re-thinking a difficulty to find a positive outcome which underpins the culture of this school. The inclusion program, the special classes established to fill a gap in provision for middle school students who have Aspergers Syndrome, the wide-ranging vocational opportunities, the extra curricular experiences are all examples of an exemplary solution to the creative response to resourcing and professional development.

However, the resources in the Hungerford building are in need some upgrading. Classroom areas for teaching practical subjects are not as well resourced as is necessary to ensure that the approach is sufficiently practical to ensure that all students can learn. Not all classes are equipped to meet the needs of the full range of students and optimize learning for all, thereby supporting differentiated instruction. Teaching through a sensory curriculum and use of kinesthetic approaches when coupled with technology is a powerful way of accelerated learning for students with learning difficulties.

At present, the use of technology is under-developed. Computer assisted learning is an essential tool for all students, but for those for whom communication is a major problem, it is essential. Insufficient use is made of visual media and resources such as Smart Boards, which would enable some students, particularly those who are profoundly physically disabled, to enjoy and participate in classes interactively.

**Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

### **This is well-developed overall**

The principal and assistant principals work as a team, successfully leading and managing important aspects of school development, including instruction. They are a very experienced team. The culture, which permeates the building, is one of high expectations, accountability and reflective practice. There is shared planning time and professional development is recognized as essential for school improvement and enrichment. The school benefits from a coordinator for parent liaison, guidance counselors and a leader in training and who brings into the school ideas which stem from her own training and professional development. Teams and tasks are student focused.

The planned developments in curriculum and assessment will require a program of professional development which links whole-school and individual professional development needs. A program of classroom observation which is supportive, non judgmental and which is linked to goals to professional development is an essential component in ensuring that individuals continue to improve and whole school priorities are met and teaching and learning are at the drivers for all PD. By investing time in

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classroom observation and well-focused feedback, the senior team is demonstrating their commitment to professional development and support for all staff. This developmental approach fits well with the school's culture of continuous improvement.

**Quality Statement 5: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

**This is well-developed overall, but there are some aspects which are a work in progress.**

Student progress is carefully monitored, learning outcomes are reflected in the design and review of individual programs. Where a program of teaching and support fails to have the desired outcome, the teaching and multi-professional team reflect and act by considering how best to over-come barriers for individual students. The adoption of the Alternate Performance Indicators to ensure that the school is better able to standardize the outcomes for learning is an example of this response. The staff is encouraged to be reflective and to be imaginative in their response to barriers.

This is a multi –faceted school, with sites spread through Staten Island, a wealth of vocational and community development, liaison and activities and a range of students and parents who require a highly individualized level of support. The Comprehensive Education Plan is a thorough document. However, it would be timely now to draw together a plan which charts the program of professional development is to be linked to whole school priorities and resourcing. This would fit well with the principal's leadership style, which is both transparent and innovative.

### **Other key observations**

This is a highly successful school where there is a culture of reflection and action. There is an energy and commitment to overcoming difficulties and over-coming barriers that is inspirational. Students are themselves willing to tell the story of what the school has done for them and this is perhaps the most important story to hear, they are proud of themselves and their school and know there is always someone who will listen to them and act as their advocate.

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### Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary

<b>Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.</b>	o	✓	+
<p>1.1 The school uses available data (e.g., diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, students work products, standards-based portfolios, attendance, descriptive review, security data, etc.) and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are:</p> <p>(1) currently performing, and                      (2) progressing over time, on English Language Arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects.</p> <p>Criteria for measuring student progress are "objective" when they are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• standards-based,</li> <li>• consistent across students,</li> <li>• capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice,</li> </ul> <p>and when they allow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the performance of different students to be compared, and</li> <li>• learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified.</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
<p>1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English Language Learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school.</p> <p>{This criterion and the next are partially aspirational as of now. City and State Report Cards and Division of Accountability and Assessment reports provide only some of the necessary data. The NYC DOE will soon provide schools with fuller access to better data.}</p>			<b>X</b>
<p>1.3 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.</p>			<b>X</b>
<b>Quality Statement 2: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	o	✓	+
<p>2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable, goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and it develops plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.</p>			<b>X</b>
<p>2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as warranting attention.</p>			<b>X</b>
<p>2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.</p>			<b>X</b>
<p>2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.</p>			<b>X</b>
<p>2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners</p>			<b>X</b>

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<b>Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	0	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals.		X	
3.2 Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the day and week needed to inform teachers about each student's performance and next learning steps, set goals and plans for improved student learning, and implement and continuously improve plans for reaching stated goals.			X
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.5 Teachers are accountable for student outcomes. The Principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.7 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
3.8 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.9 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X

<b>Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	0	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer- evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including, when possible, by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.			X
4.5 The Principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed.			X

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Quality Statement 5: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.	o	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by interim assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve students' academic outcomes.			X