



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR HALEWOOD ACADEMY

Name of School:	Halewood Academy
Headteacher/Principal:	Ian Critchley
Hub:	Aspire Hub
School phase:	Secondary
MAT (if applicable):	Wade Deacon Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Effective
Date of this Review:	27/11/2024
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Effective
Date of last QA Review	16/03/2024
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	16/03/2022

1. Context and character of the school

Halewood Academy is a large 11-16 secondary located in an area of very high social deprivation. Knowsley, where the school is situated, is the third most deprived local authority in England and Wales. This results in half of the student population falling into the disadvantaged category. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is double the national average, and those with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) is similarly above average. Almost all students are of White British heritage with only a small number for whom English is an additional language. There are more boys than girls in the school.

The school has been on a long improvement journey and its reputation in the community has grown over time; it is now over-subscribed. Since joining the Wade Deacon Trust in 2017, the support the school has received has unquestionably contributed to the change in the school's direction. The current principal joined the school in September 2022, and he has appointed several senior and middle leaders since his arrival. This has resulted in much needed stability among senior leaders, and with many teachers having undertaken or still involved in national professional qualifications, there is increasing capacity in leadership at all levels. 'We Seek the Best' is the school's motto, encouraging increased aspirations among the students.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The principal and his senior leadership team (SLT) lead the school with ambition and a strong vision. They have instigated robust systems which use data very effectively and have seen a rapid improvement in behaviour and attendance. Governors have a diverse range of skills and know the school through regular visits; they provide challenge and support.
- The passion and drive for success, modelled by the SLT, are matched by the middle leader group. They lead their departments very well and have worked closely with their teams to create a well-sequenced curriculum that is appropriate for the students.
- Leaders are working hard to raise students' aspirations at all levels, from improvements in attendance, academic progress and attainment and by providing a rich range of cultural, sporting and leadership opportunities. Outcomes in a range of subjects and across a range of student groups are improving.

- Since September 2022, the new behaviour for learning policy has simplified and clarified systems, which are understood and consistently applied by all stakeholders. The clear graduated approach with a range of 'R' rooms (such as re-engage and reset) give students short-term and medium-term support to improve their conduct. There has been a notable reduction in behaviour incidents and suspensions and there is a palpably calm atmosphere that is consistently visible in classrooms and during unstructured time.
- Leaders of teaching and learning clearly communicate the whole school priorities and direction. Every teacher has an instructional coach and this is improving the quality of teaching and learning through teachers having personalised, frequent, graduated steps to help them improve their practice.
- Attendance is very well led with a robust system which enables the team to take swift action following daily, highly focused meetings. As a result, attendance is improving significantly and is now higher than national figures.
- Leaders and teachers speak positively about the impact of the trust in terms of the support it provides in a range of areas. These include leadership and subject specific support through the curriculum expert leads (CELs).
- Personal development is a strength and has clear strategic intent, mapped across different subjects, and a comprehensive framework. It covers local issues such as domestic violence and childhood obesity. This has led to significantly lower 'not in education employment or training' (NEET) figures than the local average.
- Student leadership has been growing over time and the size of the Year 11 prefect team has increased significantly this year. Student leaders have opportunities to deliver reading interventions and take part in a range of councils such as wellbeing and ecological.

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

... the consistency of teaching and learning had a demonstrable impact on the quality of work in students' books and outcomes across the curriculum.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Relationships between staff and students are extremely positive and are built on mutual respect. Classroom routines are clear and consistent. This engenders students' willingness to engage with subjects. This was notably observed in a Year 7 food lesson when students arrived prepared and waiting eagerly to start a practical.

- The consistent approach to planning is having a clear impact. The structure of all lessons having an 'I do', 'we do' and 'you do' phase ensures that classrooms have a calm and settled atmosphere with crisp and purposeful starts. This enables all students, including those with SEND and who are disadvantaged, to engage with their learning. In a Year 8 science lesson, during the 'I do' phase, the teacher explained the chromatography process and checked that students understood before moving to the 'we do' phase.
- Low stakes retrieval practice, such as review tasks, is an integral part of learning. This helps students to recall prior knowledge, enabling them to remember information that will assist them with current and future learning. This was notably observed in a Year 7 mathematics lesson when students used manipulatives to demonstrate their understanding.
- Modelling is strong in many lessons and teachers use visualisers well to model what an effective piece of work looks like. In a Year 11 English lesson, the teacher annotated a model answer, which students also had copies of, and, as the teacher modelled her thought processes, students added their own ideas and developed their ability to analyse text.
- In the best lessons, students' understanding is checked efficiently, through a range of strategies. In a Year 8 computer science lesson, mini whiteboards were used effectively to enable the teacher to check whole class understanding. This was followed by targeted questions to some students to further develop their thinking.
- Appropriate scaffolding is evident in many lessons and supports students with SEND to make good progress over time. In a Year 9 English lesson, as a result of excellent scaffolding, students were able to articulate their learning and make links to prior learning.
- Students' command of vocabulary is often emphasised. In a Year 7 PE lesson, key words were displayed and were referred to by the teacher throughout the 'I do' phase. Students were then heard using these words during the 'we do' phase of the lesson.
- Students show pride in their work. Feedback systems are well embedded and students usually respond to feedback from teachers to improve their work. Science is notably an area where the work in students' books is strong.
- Students are all tested on numeracy each year as part of a local authority initiative. Numeracy is embedded through 'Reach for the stars' programme to better support parents who may have struggled with numeracy, and national competitions such as times tables rock stars.

- The school has a strong enrichment offer which makes a significant contribution to students' cultural capital. Students attend on average five educational trips a year and have access to 110 different clubs and activities, such as a gaming club, a chess club and a library club. Students with additional needs are prioritised and provided with financial support to enable their involvement, for example, in the Duke of Edinburgh award.

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

- ... teachers consistently and efficiently checked for whole class understanding and addressed misconceptions.
- ... there were more opportunities for students to use 'SHAPE' in lessons to improve their oracy skills.
- ... there were further opportunities to stretch and challenge higher prior attaining students.

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

- Support for students with SEND is a strength. Leaders have invested heavily in this area, which benefits from a full time and deputy SEND coordinator (SENDCo). The achievement centre is very well resourced with a sensory room and sensory circuit. It has a high staff to student ratio and an art therapist who works with small groups of students.
- A new provision of nurture groups in Years 7, 8 and 9 ensures that many students with SEND are usually taught in the same room with experienced teachers who adapt the curriculum appropriately for them. Although a recent initiative, this approach has led to substantial improvements in the attendance of this group.
- There have been significant improvements in both the attendance and outcomes of students with SEND and disadvantaged students. As a result, gaps are closing between students with SEND and those without. In the last year, the gap in progress between disadvantaged students and their non-disadvantaged peers reduced by around half a grade on average.
- Student profiles are personalised, and teachers and classroom support assistants (CSAs) are aware of these and put specific adaptations in place such as coloured paper, laptops and multi-sensory devices. As a result,

students with SEND were able to articulate their learning using subject specific vocabulary in computer science and geography.

- CSAs usually support students well. In a Year 7 geography lesson, the CSAs circulated and provided individual support where necessary, so that students understood what they needed to do and were engaged in their learning.
- Leaders track the engagement of disadvantaged students well in extra-curricular activities and the Year 11 super curriculum intervention sessions. Disadvantaged students are disproportionately over-represented in opportunities such as the Brilliant Club.

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

- ... texts that students read in lessons were appropriately chunked and presented to make them accessible to students with SEND and low prior attainers.
- ... all classroom support staff were consistently effective in supporting students in lessons.
- ... disadvantaged students continued to improve their achievement across all subjects.

5. Area of Excellence

N/A

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 hub networks 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 network 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>)