



**VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP QUALITY  
ASSURANCE REVIEW**

**REVIEW REPORT FOR  
THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL  
SCHOOL LEICESTER**

<b>Name of School:</b>	The Children's Hospital School Leicester
<b>Headteacher:</b>	Stephen Deadman
<b>Hub:</b>	Ash Field
<b>School phase:</b>	Foundation Special
<b>MAT:</b>	Not applicable

<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this virtual Leadership Quality Assurance Review:</b>	Leading
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	16/11/2020
<b>Overall Estimate at last QA Review:</b>	Outstanding
<b>Date of last QA Review:</b>	18/03/2019
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	Outstanding
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	27/06/2017



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#### Quality Assurance Review

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

<b>Leadership at all Levels</b>	Leading
<b>School Improvement Strategies</b>	Leading
<b>Approach to recovery and remote learning</b>	Not applicable
<b>Area of Excellence</b>	Not offered at this review
<b>Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence</b>	A personalised continuum of education and care
<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate</b>	Leading

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



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## 1. Context and character of the school

The school educates students, from the ages of three to 18, with a wide range of abilities. Students cannot access education in their usual settings, due to a wide range of physical and/or mental health issues.

During the last academic year, 288 students from Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland received a form of education and support. The school provides a personalised continuum of education and care.

The proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, and those who speak English as a second language, are below the national average. The proportion of students who are disadvantaged is above the national average.

The school comprises three sites. Willow Bank secondary school offers longer term provision. Leicester Royal Infirmary (LRI) educates primary and secondary aged students on the hospital wards. The recently opened Beacon CAMHS unit educates and supports students from 13 to 18. These students with mental health needs are educated as inpatients from across the country. In addition, the school provides outreach support for students who are unable to attend school settings.

The school actively leads and contributes to improving students' outcomes, locally and nationally. The school is a member of the City of Leicester Association of Special Schools (CLASS), the Ash Field Teaching Alliance and the National Association for Hospital Education.

### 2.1 Leadership at all Levels - What went well

- Leaders, ably supported by governors, have high aspirations for the school. Leaders are visible, sharing and modelling their ambitious vision across all sites. This results in consistent 'buy in' from staff across the school, which ensures consistent, exemplary practice.

- Some movement of staff between site teams and shared continuous professional development (CPD) successfully balances the need to meet the needs within each setting, while promoting whole school identity.
- Senior and middle leaders undertake relevant national professional qualifications, including the national SENCO qualification and National Professional Leadership Qualifications for senior and middle leaders. These result in senior and middle leaders becoming highly effective. They share their knowledge and skills across the school to deliver high quality teaching and learning within a relevant and well thought out curriculum.
- The school delivers comprehensive CPD for staff at all levels. Leaders are discerning in creating and choosing opportunities to develop staff in order to deliver maximum impact on students' outcomes. CPD is delivered internally and, using relevant external resources, this results in well-motivated, skilled and highly effective practitioners. Successful CPD was delivered to larger groups at the school, including Acquired Brain Injury Training and Autism Good Practice Level 2. Monitoring of subsequent staff practice and staff self-evaluation of the impact of the training were consistently high.
- Support for students' pastoral and special educational needs is a strong feature of the school. The SENCO and curriculum leaders enjoy well established links with local networks and schools. These relationships result in improved practice in school and smoother, more effective, transitions into and out of the school.
- Leaders continue to develop and improve systems to support students' mental health, well-being and resilience. Therapy is well integrated into school provision. It is not an 'add on.' This includes implementing the THRIVE programme, which incorporates aspects of neuroscience, attachment theory and child development. Leaders continue to develop in-house and external therapeutic interventions. These include Alpaca therapy, a therapy dog and improved links to CAMHS, resulting in improved holistic outcomes for students. Measures of students' progress include the use of the whole child attributes assessment and the revised child anxiety and depression scale. Students make remarkable personal development and academic improvements.
- The well-designed curriculum aims to make students work ready, ready for further study and be life ready. The curriculum has a good balance of academic and vocational subjects, including film studies and art. The curriculum offer is adapted to successfully meet the needs of high attaining students, students on a more vocational pathway and those with more severe learning disabilities. In recent

years the school has further increased the focus on resilience and independence to better prepare students for life after school.

- The school has developed useful partnerships with the local community, colleges, local businesses and schools. These have resulted in increased work experience opportunities and the delivery of interview skills. Links to local colleges are well organised. The school holds an annual college fair on site to better inform students' choices in further education options.
- Careers education is well planned. The school has successfully adopted the Gatsby benchmarks across all relevant settings. This has resulted in improved careers education in the curriculum, wider opportunities with employers and smooth transition to post-16 provision.
- School leaders and staff share their excellent practice in many various ways across local school networks. This includes CLASS peer reviews with Leicester schools and work in collaboration with a number of teaching schools across the region. The school provides a comprehensive programme of school to school, bespoke support and a comprehensive programme of CPD to support and improve practice in a wide range of educational settings.

## **2.2 Leadership at all Levels - Even better if...**

...family and parent partnerships were further developed to build academic and life success for students.

## **3.1 School improvement strategies and the extent to which these address the needs of different groups of learners, especially disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs- What went well**

- Senior leaders know the school at a deep level and use data to drive school improvement well. They successfully balance nurture with high expectations. Leaders recognise what is not going so well and take the necessary steps to rectify the situation.

- Leaders have a realistic view of the school's effectiveness. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate, resulting in incisive actions, always focussed on improved, holistic student outcomes.
- Leaders have established coaching across the school which has resulted in a creative learning culture. There are numerous opportunities for collaborative planning and evaluation. Quality assurance is a strong feature of the school. Learning walks and work scrutiny are not 'done to', they are 'done with' staff. This leads to a high level of supportive challenge. Middle leaders say that they have freedom and trust, together with autonomy and responsibility to take risks in order to improve provision and outcomes for students.
- Knowledgeable, experienced staff use information from referrals and a three-week assessment period to identify the correct pathway for students. Rigorous assessment procedures rapidly identify students who require statutory assessment and the provision of an Education, Health and Care Plan. School staff set interim, holistic SMART targets, which are shared and well understood by staff at all levels. Data on target attainment is regularly monitored to ensure that progress is maximised by rapidly addressing arising issues.
- Students have strong relationships with staff which support their well-being effectively. As a result of these relationships, the students feel secure and confident to follow their interests. Students respond well to high expectations and the warm, nurturing culture. They talk about teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) making great efforts to understand them and being given "just the right amount of push". Students show clear understanding of their own strengths as well as their limitations.
- Parents recognise the honest, clear and open communication with the school. They praised the graduated approach adopted by the school which results in students feeling safe and secure at school with a strong sense of belonging.
- Due to the passion and skill of school staff, delivering person-centred and holistic education, using clear strategies with rigorous tracking systems, most students catch up after significant gaps in their learning. In some cases, students successfully catch up by two years of learning in six months. Most students reintegrate into mainstream settings.
- Students in all settings make strong progress from their starting points, despite significant challenges in their lives. Overall, students achieved exceptionally well against recent, more challenging academic targets. In 2020, students were much closer to their target grades based on Key Stage 2 data compared with 2019. In

2020, the average number of qualifications per student increased again from 2019, with most students achieving GCSEs in English, mathematics and science. This was a significant increase from 2019.

- School leaders identify students who are disadvantaged. A family support worker is highly effective in connecting families to appropriate housing, financial and emotional support. Leaders successfully engage with parents in frank, supportive conversations to promote maximal attendance among students who find attending school challenging.
- Disadvantaged students make at least as much progress as their non-disadvantaged counterparts. There are numerous case studies which demonstrate significantly improved attendance and engagement with learning, resulting in improved academic and vocational progress and successful enrolment in college. This represents outstanding progress for students with troubled backgrounds of social disadvantage and impaired mental and/or physical health.

### **3.2 School improvement strategies and the extent to which these address the needs of different groups of learners, especially disadvantaged pupils and those with additional needs - Even better if...**

...leaders better understood the critical factors that determine how successful students are in the next stage of their education, employment or training by gathering more detailed intelligence, so that school leavers are better equipped.

### **4.1 Approach to recovery and remote learning - What went well**

- Leaders and school staff have shown great imagination and adaptability, embracing the diverse challenges of the pandemic in each of the school settings, resulting in students' learning and emotional needs being well met. Staff have worked beyond their job descriptions. For example, staff were involved in delivering laptops to students and in sourcing and delivering food to more vulnerable families.

- During the lockdown period, the school website was modified, and students' work was e-mailed home. The school established a virtual hub and further developed the virtual learning environment. Leaders and teaching staff ensured that important aspects of the school day were presented to students remotely. For example, the daily 'uplift' session and 'student of the week' award enabled students to retain a sense of normality and routine in uncertain, challenging times.
- Leaders have recognised the benefits of remote learning which some of the more anxious students have found beneficial. The offer of more targeted, remote learning, as part of students' education offer, is likely to form a part of the curriculum delivery for some students when the pandemic is over.
- During the period of lockdown, pastoral, teaching and learning responsibilities were well organised to maximise learning and keep students safe.
- Leaders have planned and responded well to higher levels of anxiety in both staff and students during lockdown periods. Staff have benefitted from informal social support as well as more formal clinical supervision.
- Live teaching on-line continues to be developed and improved. It forms an important complement to current teaching and learning, especially in the classrooms.

#### **4.2 Approach to recovery and remote learning - Even better if...**

...due to raised staff expectations when setting personalised home learning tasks, students further developed independent study skills and took greater responsibility for their learning.

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

School leaders are aware of how to access support. They access support as and when required.





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**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.**

**Schools can also 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.**

**Schools can also attend Sharing Leading Practice events where schools showcase excellent and/or innovative practice. Sharing Leading Practice events allow school leaders with specific improvement needs to visit a school or attend an online webinar hosted by a school, with outstanding provision in that area.**

**Both the School Support Directory and the Shared Leading Practice events can be accessed via the Challenge Partners website.**