

Name of School:	The Children's Hospital School
Headteacher/Principal:	Stephen Deadman
Hub:	Ash Field Hub
School phase:	Foundation special
MAT (if applicable):	Not applicable

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Not applicable
Date of this Review:	17/11/2025
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	Leading
Date of last QA Review:	25/04/2023
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	03/10/2023

Quality Assurance Review

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

Leadership at all levels Not applicable

Quality of provision and outcomes Not applicable

AND

Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with additional needs Not applicable

Area of excellence None submitted for this review

Previously accredited valid areas of excellence Mental Health, 25/04/2023

Overall peer evaluation estimate Not Applicable

Important information

- The QA Review provides a peer evaluation of a school's practice in curriculum, teaching and learning, and leadership. It is a voluntary and developmental process, and the peer review team can evaluate and offer 'peer evaluation estimates' based only on what the school chooses to share with them.
- The QA Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades. The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is developmental not judgmental.
- The QA Review report is primarily for the school's internal use to support the school's continuing improvement. If you choose to share this report, or extracts thereof, externally (e.g. on your website or with parents), please ensure that it is accompanied with the following text:

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

The Children's Hospital School in Leicester educates students aged 2 to 19 who cannot access mainstream provision due to medical and mental health needs. Students arrive with significant gaps in learning, so the school provides a personalised curriculum, high quality teaching, and targeted interventions to improve outcomes and successfully support transitions to the next stage of education. The school's aim is to ensure all students are 'work ready, ready for further study, and life ready.' A bespoke curriculum highlights personal development while enabling students to achieve GCSEs in English, mathematics, and science, alongside additional qualifications tailored to their needs.

The school operates across five sites. Two provide hospital-based provision and three offer community provision, including 12-week programmes that help students re-engage with education. The school has expanded significantly and has around 70 staff and approximately 130 students on roll at any time. Most students are dual rolled, and 24 have an education, health and care plan (EHCP), though numbers fluctuate due to the transient cohort. The proportion of disadvantaged students is broadly in line with national figures. The school has responded well to previous EBIs. For example, subject leaders have increased involvement and autonomy in quality assurance of curriculum areas.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The local governing body at the school is experienced and highly skilled, providing robust support and challenge to leaders. Each governor has an assigned link area, such as STEM, and between them they undertake 12 scheduled monitoring visits per year. These visits are closely aligned with the school improvement plan (SIP) and are formally recorded, ensuring governors are fully informed and able to hold leaders effectively to account.
- The headteacher has established a cohesive and effective leadership team with a shared vision and a culture of continuous improvement. Leaders demonstrate consistently high expectations and strong ambition for all students. For example, the diagnostic use of Fischer Family Trust data informs targeted stretch and challenge, supporting accurate target setting. Leaders have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, how these connect to the SIP, and are empowered to take ownership of specific areas.
- School improvement is carefully prioritised and strategically planned in line with the school's vision. Whole school priorities sit under six overarching headings, driving coordinated improvement across all areas of the organisation. Progress is systematically quality assured and evaluated through the school's self-evaluation framework (SEF). Staff value the school's emphasis on professional development. The pedagogical coaching

programme is well regarded by staff and quality assurance illustrates it has enhanced classroom practice.

- Leaders work effectively with a wide range of external agencies under a shared goal of supporting student recovery, with the school providing the educational element. For example, partnerships with health teams at The Beacon, Glenfield Hospital, a CAMHS adolescent psychiatric unit, strengthen the shared management of risk for these highly vulnerable young people. Leaders also collaborate extensively with the local authority and neighbouring schools. They have established and now lead a local mental health hub. Across partnership work, leaders share their expertise and provide training and professional development opportunities.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, encompassing English language, English literature, mathematics, science, and additional GCSEs. It is well planned to build on prior learning and ensure continuity. The school goes above and beyond to work with partner schools so can offer subjects such as music and Italian when required to maintain students' curriculum pathways. In addition, in English literature, students can continue to study the texts they started at their home school.
- Extracurricular and cultural opportunities are diverse, extensive, and carefully mapped and tracked. Activities include visits to the National Arboretum, Buddhist meditation centre, Duke of Edinburgh expeditions, and artist in residence programmes for inpatient settings. These experiences are celebrated with parents and support personal development alongside academic learning.
- Leaders have implemented a clear whole school attendance strategy, which is tightly tracked. This focuses on gradually building trust and engagement, which has significantly improved attendance for students who have been out of education for extended periods. Reading has been prioritised across the school, with interventions closely monitored. The impact is evident in measurable increases in reading ages over 12 months, demonstrating tangible progress in students' literacy skills.

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

- ... proportionate, evidence-informed quality assurance was implemented across all sites, providing strategic oversight of curriculum, teaching, and pastoral provision.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Teaching and learning across the school are grounded in research-informed practice and driven by the teaching and learning group. Staff engage in professional learning communities through pedagogical coaching based on the Nancy Kline model. Staff reported that this has strengthened professional

REVIEW REPORT FOR THE
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL SCHOOL

dialogue and enabled meaningful cross-faculty collaboration. They describe a culture where they 'do not work as individual islands'. The group is currently developing a 'learning habits framework' to build students' independence, resilience, and metacognition.

- Lessons routinely revisit prior learning and build knowledge in a deliberate and coherent way. In a Key Stage 4 English lesson, new teaching built explicitly on earlier poetry analysis, while in a Key Stage 3 art lesson, purposeful links were made to previously taught techniques. In a Key Stage 4 mathematics lesson, strong modelling, precise explanations, and targeted scaffolding enabled students to tackle more challenging multiplication and subtraction problems with confidence. At the hospital provision, effective questioning and ongoing assessment in Key Stage 4 English and mathematics lessons prevented misconceptions and secured rapid progress. Students were engaged and rightly proud of what they achieved.
- The curriculum is ambitious, personalised, and appropriately adapted across sites. Where possible, students access the same curriculum as their home schools, supporting engagement and improving attainment. For example, The Beacon offers AQA awards aligned to students' interests. Curriculum intent is well defined within subjects. In mathematics, for instance, the curriculum prioritises independence, resilience, and the successful application of skills beyond school. The effective use of dual coded resources seen in lessons helps reduce cognitive load and improves accessibility.
- The school provides a wide range of extracurricular and cultural experiences, which are tracked to ensure equity. At the Magpie Learning Centre, a parent noted that activities such as a Macmillan coffee morning, arts and crafts sessions, and community trips were opportunities her child had never accessed at their home school.
- Literacy is embedded across the curriculum through consistent whole school strategies. The 'Word of the week' and explicit teaching of technical vocabulary ensure students can access subject content confidently. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson the teacher deliberately checked understanding of the term 'integer'. In a pedagogical coaching session, staff discussed how to support a weaker reader to remember scientific vocabulary related to plant cells using a Twinkl resource. This boosted the student's enthusiasm and helped secure long term knowledge retention. The school's reading strategy is comprehensive and closely monitored, with interventions leading to measurable improvements in students' reading ages. All students are assessed on entry, and staff have been trained in *That Reading Thing* to strengthen consistency in practice. Opportunities for both individual and group reading are embedded across the curriculum. Each Friday, the school also offers therapeutic reading sessions, where students bring a book and are read to, helping to promote enjoyment and confidence in reading.
- Highly personalised careers education and strong transition support contribute to low NEET outcomes. Relationships are central to student success, and

communication between families, home schools, and staff follows a triangulated model that ensures clear expectations and consistency. The Specialist Taskforce provides pastoral support, mentoring, therapeutic input, and practical transition guidance, helping students feel a sense of belonging and improving attendance. Their creative approaches, from boxing to photography, successfully encourage students back into school and maintain engagement. Parents describe the impact as transformative. One parent, whose daughter attends Magpie Learning Centre, wrote in an email, 'We've gone from a family in despair to a family discussing her future in education'.

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

- ... the longer-term impact of provision on parents and families after they leave was captured, including inviting former students to return and share their experiences.
- ... expertise enabling schools to put in student support and reduce escalation to referrals was shared.
- ... assessment in lessons was further developed to consistently check student understanding and address misconceptions.

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

- SEND provision is rigorously quality assured. The SEND coordinator monitors classroom practice, delivers targeted training, and maps staff training needs. Students' needs are accurately identified, with morning briefings ensuring staff are proactive and able to adapt provision. In September 2025, the Magpie Learning Centre opened a designated specialist provision for Key Stage 3, and Willow Bank opened one for Key Stage 4. Both are already improving attendance and engagement. One parent wrote: 'I cannot recommend the place enough. If every child in this situation had this opportunity, it would be a much better world.'
- The pupil premium strategy is responsive, tightly monitored and reviewed annually with the link governor. It prioritises disadvantaged students for trips, English and mathematics interventions, and work experience. Leaders track attainment, effort, attendance, and wider development. Subject leaders evaluate intervention impact, contributing to a significant narrowing of the attainment gap. The strategy adapts to the school's transient population. For

example, quiet spaces were provided when more students presented with eating disorders.

- Students benefit from a broad range of ambitious opportunities. The cultural capital planner includes residentials, London visits, charity events and extended work experience. Last academic year, all but one disadvantaged student participated in a day trip.
- The Specialist Taskforce is central to engagement and transition. They hold personalised weekly meetings, gather student and family voice, and provide mentoring, therapeutic support, and family outreach. Using targeted funding opportunities, including boxing, mechanics and narrowboat experiences, they have helped improve engagement for disadvantaged students. Their relational approach has strong impact. For example, one looked after child progressed from zero attendance to regularly attending and showing resilience and pride in their work.
- The attendance strategy builds trust through early identification and removal of barriers. Baseline and reading assessments help students access learning. Careers guidance is mapped to Gatsby benchmarks, and disadvantaged students progress to destinations at comparable rates to their peers.
- Teaching is personalised and adaptive as evidenced in the hospital provision mantra, 'medical need must not be a barrier to learning and opportunity.'

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

- ... disadvantaged students' wider skills, behaviours, and overall development were tracked to give leaders stronger strategic oversight of the provision's impact.

5. Area of Excellence

Not applicable

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>)