

Name of School:	Little Heath School
Head teacher:	James Brownlie
Hub:	London Special and AP
School type:	Maintained Special

Estimate at this QA Review:	GOOD
Date of this Review:	25/02/2019
Estimate at last QA Review:	GOOD
Date of last QA Review:	18/01/2018
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	GOOD
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	26/09/2018



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	GOOD
Outcomes for Students	GOOD
Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment	GOOD
Area of Excellence	ACCREDITED
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

Little Heath is a foundation special school for students aged 11 to 19. All students have an education, health and care plan (EHCP) relating to their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Various conditions contribute to students' moderate or severe learning difficulties. About half of the student population has complex communication needs. Some exhibit very challenging behaviour. Most students are on the autistic spectrum.

Boys outnumber girls in a ratio of approximately two to one. About a third of students are disadvantaged. Just under half have English as an additional language.

The staff to student ratio is high in accordance with EHCPs. Many learning support assistants (LSAs) have specialist therapy expertise or act as instructors for some areas of the curriculum.

The school reports that cohorts entering and those reaching Year 10, have a profile of needs that differs from older year groups. High needs and challenging behaviour are changes that are characteristic of the school's intake.

The current roll is 160. This has risen year-on-year and the school has agreed a new planned admission limit to accommodate students about to transfer from local primary provision. Sixth form numbers have stabilised at 40 plus. Some students leave Year 11 for other destinations. No leavers are recorded as not in education, employment or training.

2.1 School Improvement Strategies - Progress from previous EBIs

The school is using evidence-based self-evaluation to inform the school improvement and development plan.

The three phase leaders and core subject leaders contribute extensively to the school's new monitoring and review schedule (MARS).

Leaders continue to make the improvement of all teaching match the high quality of the best a high priority.

Sensory approaches, particularly the use of concrete resources to support learning, are frequently used in lessons.

The school is pursuing accreditation as a centre of excellence with respect to teaching students on the autistic spectrum.

2.2 School Improvement Strategies - What went well

- A deeply held vision and clarity of purpose informs all actions taken by senior leaders. This puts two items to the fore in the improvement plan. Firstly, to strategically maintain and improve teaching quality. Secondly, to extend assessment to cover more of students' personal and social development, their independence and relationship with the community. At the same time, the senior leadership team (SLT) is responding to national changes affecting assessment and to changes in the characteristics of the school's intake.
- To ensure that changes percolate to all areas of the school, middle leaders are

taking a prominent role in monitoring and improvement. The three phase leaders work to the evaluation and planning documents they have produced for each key stage and the sixth form. Leaders of core subjects, including science and computing, have written guidance and schemes of work that they use to monitor the quality of teaching and the consistency of assessment. Alongside SLT's learning walks, MARS is Little Heath's system for regularly gathering information from both groups of middle leaders about progress and teaching. Appropriate strategies – through performance management or training – adjust and improve any practice that falls below the high standards expected.

- The special educational needs coordinator has been in post for just over a year. She has implemented a system of assigning and tracking the effectiveness of individualised interventions and therapies. This is proving effective in boosting students who show signs of not progressing as well as they should. She has also improved the interpretation of students' EHCPs into targets that teachers can implement in practical ways in day-to-day classroom teaching.
- In the sixth form, in addition to subject qualifications, all students follow a core curriculum of personal development, community understanding and work-related learning. The phase leader has worked with a commercial company to create a way of summing up the multiple competencies that students gradually accrue.
- The recently appointed leader of augmentative alternative communication (AAC) is rapidly developing the use of communication devices in lessons and in other activities.

2.3 School Improvement Strategies - Even better if...

- ...as the new assessment systems embed, they presented a clear profile of pupils' personal and social achievements
- ...the highly-motivated LSAs made an even greater contribution to supporting pupils in verbalising their learning
- ...when completed, the new SIDP had measurable milestones of progress towards measurable goals for each main priority.

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

The school has extensively updated its assessment systems, including assessing personal development, and has ensured accurate moderation of outcomes. Technology is in use widely and effectively to support learning, as exemplified in the confirmed area of excellence and supported by the appointment of an augmentative communication coordinator.

More able students learning in classes with students of differing abilities, have appropriate targets for teachers to focus on.

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

- Enthusiasm on the part of staff and students contributes strongly to good pace in

learning. Praise is given immediately for genuine achievements and students delight in this.

- Warm relationships between staff and students sustain a calm atmosphere during learning. They also help to restore calm when occasionally an individual student becomes distressed.
- Well-established routines, such as clearly signalling change in activity, keep learning settled.
- Staff know students' targets and orient learning towards these goals.
- The use of tactile, real-life resources often helps students to understand how their learning relates to the world beyond school. Examples include exchanging 'money' for goods in numeracy lessons, making pizzas and even going to collect then spread manure in the school's garden.
- There are frequent opportunities for students to collaborate in groups or pairs and this encourages social communication and self-regulation. Expeditions out of school are a bold and frequent extension of students' personal and social development.
- In almost all lessons, visuals, signing and symbols are in use to support learning. However, it is when reference to them is frequently made that students' learning is really deepened.
- Very importantly, learning is at its best when students are required to verbalise their learning, or use communication devices, in responding to instructions or dialogue with adults. For example, in a lesson on 'James and the Giant Peach' with a formal pathway group, the teacher read key extracts from the story. Students repeated each sentence chanting and signing the words and reinforcing remembering. Then, groups worked together to sum up different parts of the story and presented to the class. Intensive listening was required for subsequent peer assessment of the presentations.
- In a lesson for students who were mainly pre-verbal, the teacher and LSAs helped students to plan a forthcoming day out using their devices to pick out symbols for the day's timings and travel arrangements. Gradually more and more of the students began to repeat the words they heard on their device.

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

...there was a constant emphasis on students being required to verbalise as they learn. LSAs as well as teachers have a significant part to play in encouraging students to be expressive, as well as receptive, in communication

...as in best practice seen, teachers and LSAs consistently made use of visuals, signing and symbols throughout lessons.

4. Outcomes for Students

- Students enter Year 7 with attainment that is well below age-related expectations. Increasing proportions have more complex learning difficulties. This is noticeable up to the current Year 10 group.
- Tests and observations help staff interpret incoming students' achievement and

determine targets linked to their individual EHCP. Targets displayed in classrooms ensure teachers, LSAs and students keep targets in mind. As a result, most students achieve elements of key targets in lessons.

- In responding to the changing nature of cohorts, new systems of assessment apply. The revised B Squared system allows more appropriate measures of development than previous systems tracking academic progress alone. Outcomes since September show all students making progress.
- In a few classes, piloted Autism Education Trust assessment materials show progress in areas not captured by the National Curriculum. The school is considering adopting this system of assessment and becoming a centre of expertise in autism education.
- In addition to these new systems, the school retains evidence of progress in students' learning journey logs. These records show that all students achieve in a wide variety of learning experiences.
- In the sixth form, working with a commercial company, Little Heath assesses students' responses to the community-awareness and work-related curriculum. Similarly, in relation to progress evident in the previous key stages, students achieve well in a wide range of experiences.
- Disadvantaged students progress equally as well as their peers. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls.
- Data from Key Stage 3 at the end of last year showed all students making at least expected progress from their different starting points in mathematics and in language and literacy. Compared to the previous year, there was a stronger trend of more than expected progress in language and literacy. This is because the school is boosting progress in reading by following an external system that develops students' phonics skills.
- In Key Stage 4, there is an emphasis on improving progress in writing. Using drama techniques to inspire creativity through experience, and employing resources from the area of excellence, is having a promising influence.
- Students gain a variety of external qualifications at the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Little Heath has an entry policy that finds the right pathways for individual students to reach their potential.
- Although assessment systems are new, Little Heath retains very robust moderation arrangements to help staff assess accurately.

5. Area of Excellence

Using technology to drive teaching and learning.

Accredited.

5.1 Why has this area been identified as a strength?

The extensive use of technology has impacted on students' development in two main ways. It has empowered students to participate in dialogue and social interactions in

ways that would not have been accessible previously. It has extended the students' experience of the world, both in contacts made and virtual reality adventures. In class and at home, pre-verbal students have learned to use communication devices that allow them to select a picture or symbol. The device speaks the word for them. Many of those students are beginning to acquire a spoken vocabulary with this support. They use devices to participate more in class and have contributed at public events. Students also use electronic tablets to connect with the internet and develop 'wikis' expressing their interests and adding appropriate images and web-links. This encourages self-actualisation.

Video conferencing is in use to give students access to contacts locally and across the world. Students have interacted with a much wider range of people than would otherwise be possible, including mainstream schools, authors and experts in many fields of interest. The Manhattan School of Music and the Orangutan Trust in Borneo are two of many.

Using virtual reality devices enables students to encounter environments and tasks that would not be readily accessible, or even possible. They experience different work environments and carry out tasks. They fly aeroplanes and swim underwater. At breaktimes students enjoy console-based gaming.

It might be interesting for Challenge Partners to consider offering this area of excellence as a video-conferencing activity, rather than solely as an on-site visit. Little Heath certainly has the capacity and willingness to organise such an event.

5.2 What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

The school has established a network of contacts, including with IT providers and organisations and conferences that promote the use of IT in learning. Little Heath has won grants to provide and develop equipment. There is a linked project with Guy's Hospital which is researching and developing software and devices to support communication.

5.3 What evidence is there of the impact on students' outcomes?

It is clear that the initiative engages students' interest and enhances participation in learning. A visiting reviewer, who is the headteacher of a hospital school group, is very interested in having his staff visit Little Heath to see the impact that imaginative and extensive use of technology is having.

School data is showing an increase in above expected progress in speaking and listening. Almost half of students in each key stage exceed expected progress in speaking and listening. This is an increase compared to the previous year's data. In Key Stage 3, a majority of students are making above expected progress in computing and many take external tests at entry level. For the sixth form, the subject leader has written and had validated by AQA, two new units based on virtual reality.

5.4 What is the name, job title and email address of the staff lead in



this area?

Name: Joanne Martin

Title: ICT Coordinator

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

Little Heath is an enthusiastic participant in hub activities. It does not require further support at this time.

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.