



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR NETHER HALL SCHOOL

Name of School:	Nether Hall School
Headteacher/Principal:	Sarah Naylor
Hub:	Ash Field
School phase:	Special
MAT (if applicable):	Not applicable

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	11/03/2024
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	Effective
Date of last QA Review:	15/11/2021
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Continues to be good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	21/06/2022

Quality Assurance Review

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

Leadership at all levels Leading

Quality of provision and outcomes Leading

AND

**Quality of provision and
outcomes for disadvantaged
pupils and pupils with additional
needs**

Area of excellence Accredited

**Previously accredited valid areas
of excellence** Not applicable

Overall peer evaluation estimate Leading

*The Quality Assurance Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades.
The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is
developmental not judgmental.*

1. Context and character of the school

Nether Hall is situated on the outskirts of Leicester city. It is a special school, currently catering for 132 pupils aged 4 to 19. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and an education, health and care plan (EHCP). Each pupil's primary need is either severe learning difficulties (SLD) or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). Almost half of pupils have a diagnosis of autism. Many are non-verbal. One-quarter have complex health and medical needs.

Over the past 18 months, senior leaders have considered their 'journey to outstanding'. They wanted to break the glass ceiling of 'good'. A refreshed vision followed, along with the continued development of the curriculum (whose journey began many years prior). Leaders have developed, and are continuing to develop, their own, bespoke curriculum.

Last year, leaders opted to engage with the Challenge Partners Extending Leading Practice project, hence there was no quality assurance review. The school networks with a range of external partners. There are ongoing talks with the local authority, in respect of expansion, to help respond to the huge demand for special school places in the locality.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Leaders are courageous. They ensure a strategic approach is adopted for all development work. They continually challenge their own thinking around curriculum design. This rigour has enabled senior and wider leaders to hone an offer which truly is unique to each learner at Nether Hall. This aligns well with the ever-changing cohorts and greater complexity of need.
- A collaborative, professional learning culture is in place. Leaders want staff to voice views and to have their voices listened to. Such a non-hierarchical approach is the bedrock upon which staff are encouraged to reflect on their own practice. With the mantra of always improving, the coaching model continues to evolve. Leaders have ensured that teachers are secure in the purpose and application of triad work. Now that this is in place, the tried and tested model is ready to embrace teaching assistants (TAs).
- Wider leaders enjoy greater accountability offered by senior leaders. They talk about a feeling of 'greater freedom' and of being empowered to frame their

own vision for their areas of responsibility. Wider leaders feed intelligence about provision and impact into the senior leadership team to inform strategy.

- The coaching model is responsive. Each member of the triad offers suggestions about how provision could be further refined. Leaders consider such development and use in-house or external expertise to facilitate this.
- Teachers benefit from a cohesive continuing professional development (CPD) offer. This incorporates coaching and a range of scheduled provision, such as planned pupil progress meetings and class team meetings. A range of therapy learning is facilitated, which includes speech and language, occupational, play, music and physio therapy. Recent whole school training has focused on staff building their understanding of trauma and play.
- An example of leaders' strategic thinking is how they have tailored the *evidence for learning* (EfL) platform to support staff in implementing their curriculum. Such work has enabled leaders to clarify what strong progress for each pupil looks like— often relating directly to their EHCP. This work, coupled with the coherent scheduling of provision, means that teachers are well supported in their creativity.
- Leaders have created five *learning areas*. Five wider leaders currently lead on each of these, with a further two leading on behaviour and complex and sensory. Each learning area has a curriculum framework. These frameworks are structured so that pupils are enabled to acquire component skills and knowledge before moving on to composite activities. Medium term planning captures key component learning, which leaders can view to assure themselves that each pupil receives an appropriate, well-sequenced teaching diet. A link governor for each learning area provides another layer of assurance about the offer for each pupil.

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

...leaders carefully considered how best to articulate, in a simplified way, the individualised curriculum offer so that any visitor more readily grasps the Nether Hall curriculum.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Teachers and TAs use their secure knowledge about the needs of each pupil to ensure that pedagogical choices suit each individual well. They select resources, which often provide a multi-sensory environment, which balances each pupil's cognitive load well. Staff do not provide too much support, for example, when modelling an activity.
- Each pupil's learning priorities are embedded in day-to-day practice. Pupils are encouraged to follow their own curiosities. When they do, staff observe carefully and subsequently build learning around pupils' choices. This is successful as staff are clear about their teaching focus for the individual pupil.
- Staff use a range of appropriate total communication strategies to engage with each pupil. Strategies include signing and visuals, skilfully utilised by staff and pupils. Provision is well embedded.
- Class teams share knowledge about each pupil's learning with families. The most common means of doing this is via uploading information to an online portal. Families are also keen to feed information into this, showing how their child is responding to activities at home. Evidence captured helps all stakeholders to gauge how well each pupil is progressing in respect of their learning priorities and EHCP targets.
- The class team dynamic is strong. Teachers and TAs know each other's practice well. They use this knowledge to navigate through lessons, keeping a watchful eye on how each pupil is engaging with their learning. They adopt alternative approaches if the initial one proves to be ineffective. This fluidity results in minimal dysregulation. Pupil progress meetings and twice weekly CPD sessions aid the sharing of intelligence around each pupil.
- Parents talk about their children being eager to come to school. It is clear why pupils want to be in school. They feel psychologically safe, knowing that they are well cared for and that they are free to express themselves. Further, they enjoy the healthy doses of humour which pervade classrooms and corridors. Since coming to Nether Hall, one parent commented, 'We have a new child'.
- Classroom routines and expectations are embedded. Staff have built positive classroom cultures through repeating what they want to see from pupils every day. Pupils are able to anticipate what will come next, knowing that their autonomy will be encouraged. When a pupil crawled on the floor, the teacher encouraged this behaviour as it communicated the pupil's understanding of what a baby does. Pupils trust staff — testament to the strong relationships.
- Staff have created a calm, safe, welcoming and joyful environment. Classrooms and corridors are uncluttered. There is a clear purpose around

the use of space. Consequently, pupils arrive each day knowing they can thrive at Nether Hall.

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

...teachers considered how to further support independence via planned adaptation of support, for example, TA engagement and concrete resources.

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

- Pupils and parents are well supported in their mental health and well-being. School staff facilitate NHS therapy services and in-house additional offers. This provision has a direct, positive impact on pupils and indeed on families. For example, staff listen to what families need during holiday periods and respond by providing equipment and resources. The wide range of signposting and support includes bereavement services, support for funding applications and holiday food bags.
- Pupils know they have influence, as they are listened to. One pupil sang as she said, 'I want to be a singer and want to sing in assembly'. Another voiced influence in a different way, 'I did work experience with Liz and I want to be a sports coach'. He will have this opportunity.
- Nether Hall facilitates community cohesion. Parents are welcomed into school. 'Open classrooms' are used to help parents learn about school provision, and indeed for the school to learn about how parents learn and play with their children out of school. Leaders use external reviews to help sense-check provision. A recent example asked leaders to check if parents were overwhelmed with too much information. Mental health first aid trained staff help create a place where all are valued, welcomed and supported.
- Early career teachers (ECTs) feel well supported. They talk about being confident in knowing there is 'no shame in not knowing'. Senior and wider leaders have an open-door approach which encourages ECTs, and indeed all colleagues, to ask questions. The culture is one in which everyone is still learning. All are encouraged to follow their own professional curiosity. For example, one ECT was enabled to attend a *talk for writing* course. Induction for new staff is well considered. There are additional CPD sessions for any new staff starters.

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

...the school further developed the successful peer support approach across all aspects of provision.

5. Area of Excellence

Building a bespoke assessment system that demonstrates meaningful progress for pupils with SEND.

Accredited

5.1 Why has this area been identified as a strength? What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

Leaders invite schools to experience the transformative impact of the Nether Hall bespoke assessment system, designed to cater specifically to the unique needs of every learner with SEND. Nether Hall School has adapted an online platform, EfL, to suit the individual needs of learners, showcase progress and support the personalised curriculum. Pupil progress is live and accessible to all stakeholders. Nether Hall has a robust and responsive pupil progress cycle which enables accelerated progress and is responsive to emerging needs. The school's five-point scale breaks down progress in independence, engagement and generalisation into small steps which can be analysed at all levels using *Insights for Learning*.

Staff are confident with the use of EfL. Teachers set bespoke learning priorities for pupils, based on their individual learning needs and record annotations using the online platform. Wider leaders search quickly for evidence within their area, using tags, to quality assure their areas of the curriculum. EfL has a Family app and a Learner app where families can see and exchange real time information about their child's learning. This online platform has reduced teachers' workload and enabled a community-driven approach to improve pupil outcomes. EfL is used by teachers, TAs, parents, well-being and therapy teams and is also currently being trialled for use by learners.

Wider impact includes:

- School Improvement Development Day – November 2023.

- City of Leicester Special School group – Assessment and data group visit March 2024.
- Guest speaker at Swiss Cottage 'Family learning' EFL conference March 2024.
- As a Specialist Leader in Education, the personalised approach is an area of expertise for Nether Hall School.
- Leaders worked with a range of schools to support their development of assessment using EFL.

5.2 What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?

There is a high level of personalisation through learning priorities and delivery of curriculum, as evident in learning walks.

There is now a more robust and efficient quality assurance process, specifically pupil progress meetings. This is a system that values all stakeholders in the school community. Data identifies the impact of additional support. Annotations on EFL show accurate next steps in learning for individual pupils.

Analysis of parent questionnaires, EFL Family App data, and attendance registers for various parent and family events show increases in overall family engagement.

Access to EFL and Insights for Learning – to show what progress looks like for each individual pupil. Wider leaders are currently working on individual pupil case studies. This is an area that will be developed further during the Summer term.

Nether Hall can offer schools ...

- A pupil-led approach to personalised learning.
- For non-EFL users – moving from structured, sequenced prescribed levels to personalised learning priorities.
- For existing EFL users – Engaging families, using EFL for individualised PLGs and associated assessment books.
- Using Insights for Learning to analyse pupil progress at all levels.
- Family engagement offer, including reporting to families.

5.3 What is the name, job title and email address of the staff lead in this area?

Jessica Norman and Min Sahghera
Assistant headteacher and deputy headteacher
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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 report content to create an aggregate picture of what is going on across the sector each year.

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.

Schools can also attend Sharing Leading Practice (SLP) 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.
(<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>)