

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

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Effective
Date of this Review:	19/11/2025
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Effective
Date of last QA Review	27/11/2024
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	16/03/2022

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

Quality of provision and outcomes Effective

AND

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

Area of excellence None submitted

Previously accredited valid areas of excellence Not applicable

Overall peer evaluation estimate Effective

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

Halewood Academy caters for students aged 11 to 16 and benefits from state-of-the-art facilities, which are used to enhance learning and provide high-quality opportunities. It opens from 8am each morning for breakfast clubs.

The academy is situated in an area of very high social deprivation in Knowsley Local Authority. It is the eighth most deprived local authority in England and Wales, with half of the student cohort falling into the disadvantaged category. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is twice the national average, as is the number of students holding an education, health and care plan (EHCP). The student population is predominantly White British, with only a small number of students who speak English as an additional language (EAL) and a higher proportion of boys than girls.

The academy sits at the heart of its local community. As part of the Wade Deacon Trust, the academy benefits from opportunities to work closely with other institutions to realise the shared vision of '*We seek the best together*'. The academy is built upon the core values of respect, aspire, collaborate, excellence and resilience, which shape the culture and expectations throughout. The academy is dedicated to ensuring that every student becomes the best version of themselves, achieving strongly both academically and personally.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The academy has a clear commitment to maintaining the highest standards of appearance, behaviour and work. Leaders do not shy away from having the highest expectations, believing that these are essential to ensure that students achieve well and fulfil the academy's vision.
- Leaders repeatedly communicate three core priorities in every staff briefing, using structured activities to ensure that all colleagues understand them. These same priorities flow through the school improvement and development plan (SIDP) and are shared with governors, helping create a consistent message and shared direction across the whole academy community. Governors have a clear strategic line of sight through SIDP-linked agendas mapped across the year. The use of trust and external reviews further validates progress against priorities and provides additional assurance of the improvements made.
- There is a strong 'grow your own' ethos, with a significant number of staff progressing up the leadership ladder from within. Many teachers and leaders hold National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) and engage in trust reviews and Curriculum Expert Lead (CEL) activities, significantly boosting leadership capacity and expertise at all levels.

- CELs apply a common trust framework when reviewing subjects, ensuring consistent expectations for sequencing, knowledge building and rigour. Their reports show improvement in all but two subjects, with several, including dance, PE, history, English, drama and music, now judged effective against demanding criteria.
- A well-embedded coaching culture provides every member of staff with a coach, linked to need and identified through drop-ins and quality assurance. The use of 'Steplab', clear expectations around the 'Halewood culture' and transparent conversations about performance have led to significant improvements in classroom practice.
- Leaders are precise about expectations, repeatedly reinforcing 'how we do things around here' with staff and students. Routines are explicit, over-communicated and clearly understood throughout the academy. They model expectations relentlessly around the site and challenge inconsistencies in the moment, leading to calmer corridors and more purposeful classrooms.
- Middle leaders have an overwhelming feeling of pride in their leadership. INSET days have provided them with valuable support and had an impact on the quality of curriculum implementation. They praised the shared language of expectations and the 'I do, we do, you do' approach and how this has raised awareness of the achievement of students with SEND and those who are disadvantaged.
- Milestone tracking at each data point, fortnightly core meetings with pastoral and SEND leads, and a wide range of interventions, including academic mentoring, revision packs, subject-specific programmes, calculator strategy, English 'Bible' booklets, have created a comprehensive improvement model. Retrospective comparison of 'red, amber, green' (RAG) predictions with final outcomes showed high accuracy, demonstrating a successful approach.
- A mastery system with clear assessment steps, rooted in national curriculum objectives, has sharpened the reliability of Key Stage 3 data. Leaders have used SISRA projections to challenge over-generous assessments, match test design to GCSE demands and ensure that outcomes at Key Stage 3 plausibly predict Key Stage 4 performance.
- Governors are fully informed about the academy's work. Leaders present information to governors on their areas of responsibility and impact. This creates a shared understanding of priorities and collective ownership across the wider academy community.
- Student leadership is excellent, offering structured opportunities from Year 7 onwards that build confidence, responsibility and key life skills. Assumed roles across councils, form representation and enrichment prepare students well for Year 11 prefect positions. Leadership is clearly linked with the academy's core values, resulting in motivated, articulate and resilient students who positively influence the academy community.

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

... leaders continued to evaluate strategies to ensure that the impact on outcomes is sustained and improved.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Students are courteous, positive and work hard. They attend well and are willing to always give their best. Positive relationships are identified as central to the academy's success, including those between staff and students and those with families and the wider community. These relationships are excellent and continue to strengthen. Students liked teachers' resources which supported revision strategies and study skills. They spoke about getting better, 'I look at my tracker and can see I am improving'. Most students were clear about how to improve their work because teachers provided clear action points.
- Academic achievement is strong, with many subjects performing above national averages. Leaders are passionate about education and preparing students well for their future pathways beyond Halewood. The academy offers a highly academic curriculum, while also nurturing students' individual talents and interests. Some students access an alternative curriculum where appropriate.
- The introduction of an ambitious RAG process, with an aspirational basics target at the 9–5 benchmark, has provided clarity and focus. Every English, mathematics and science teacher knows precisely which students need to secure thresholds, enabling tightly targeted quality-first teaching and carefully planned interventions.
- Personal development is high priority and taught by designated teachers which promotes improved links across subjects. The sequencing of lessons is in place, yet it is flexible. Curriculum topics can be brought forward in response to any issues in the academy.
- A new trust-wide reading curriculum provides structured reading lessons in Years 7 and 8 weekly and in Year 9 fortnightly, focusing on vocabulary, comprehension, clarification, summarising and evaluation. This is underpinned by extensive continuing professional development (CPD) for staff and supported by the librarian, complementing targeted interventions and contributing to rising English and mathematics outcomes.
- The academy's 'I Do, We Do, You Do' and 'Blue Zone' activities ensure increasing consistency across classrooms. In a Year 9 English lesson, the students were studying a passage from the 'Ghost Road'; the teacher articulated the lesson phases well, particularly during the 'I Do' phase, outlining to the students the sequence of the lesson and how the different learning episodes would enable the students to succeed in the 'Blue Zone' activity.

- In drama, because the teacher provided a well-chosen stimulus, the Knife Angel, Year 10 students could express their feelings and could successfully discuss their ideas in their group. One girl said, 'Come on, girls, we can do this!' in response to the teacher's task. Books were impeccably marked, identifying strengths and areas for improvement and, as a result, students responded exceptionally well to their feedback.
- In a Year 9 Spanish lesson, students were working quietly on their 'Blue Zone' activity, testing their recall of festivals using a knowledge organiser to support. Students were working independently; this enabled them to apply knowledge from the 'We Do' activity and demonstrate their progress and understanding.
- The academy has an extensive array of extra-curricular activities, with 130 offered each week, ranging from sports and art to chess, darts and numerous other clubs. Students also have opportunities to travel, with previous trips including Rome, London, Berlin and participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award.
- Provision for British Values is strong, well-embedded and promoted through the personal development curriculum, assemblies and student leadership. Clear expectations, diverse learning, community links and a respectful ethos ensure that students understand and actively demonstrate these values in daily academy life.

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

- ... in all lessons, a broader range of assessment for learning strategies, especially in the 'We do' phase, enabled teachers to gather evidence about students' achievement.
- ... all teachers consistently narrated the lesson model and core knowledge to ensure that students were clear about how this links to the success criteria.

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

- The inclusion team has a strong forensic understanding of individual student needs. Detailed assessments, close observation and multi-agency dialogue help the team to unpick the root causes of students' barriers to learning. Their tenacity, professional curiosity and refusal to make assumptions ensure that no stone is left unturned. This detailed diagnostic approach underpins accurate support, better placement decisions and improved outcomes for vulnerable students.
- Regular RAG meetings, tight links between pastoral and SEND teams and consistent information-sharing mean that students at risk of falling behind are identified much earlier. Progress leaders, mentors and SEND specialists work

together to ensure that needs do not go unnoticed which increases students' receipt of timely, targeted support.

- The academy has invested meaningfully in developing inclusive pedagogy. Staff benefit from CPD on scaffolding, how to teach vocabulary and adaptive teaching, much of it delivered by practitioners with proven expertise. This has led to more accessible lessons, stronger independence during 'Blue Zone' tasks and improved work outcomes. The emphasis on 'vital for some, valuable for all' is clearly influencing practice.
- The nurture and reset models offer safe, structured environments where students' learning needs can be accurately assessed and supported. Flexible movement between groups, tailored interventions and strong relationships with consistent staff help students stabilise and re-engage. Reintegration is thoughtful, with clear pathways into Key Stage 4. For many students, this has prevented disengagement, improved attendance and secured more appropriate long-term placements.
- The 'PP3 strategy', where every teacher has three clearly identified disadvantaged focus students whose attendance is strong and whose grades sit at crucial thresholds, has delivered rapid, tangible impact. Most identified disadvantaged students maintained or exceeded expected progress through focused questioning, seating plans and consistent staff attention.
- Parental engagement has shifted dramatically through tenacious communication, structured pre-parents' evenings, rapid follow-up calls and a clear focus on disadvantaged families. Attendance at key events, such as Year 7 'Meet the Tutor', has risen significantly. This demonstrates that trust, consistency and early contact are securing stronger home-school partnerships and positively influencing attendance and progress.

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

- ... leaders of SEND were able to provide additional CPD to enhance practice to further develop access to the curriculum.
- ... even more students were exposed to successful interventions, particularly in reading.

5. Area of Excellence

Not submitted for this review.

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>)