



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR SHERWOOD FOUNDATION SCHOOL

Name of School:	Sherwood Foundation School
Headteacher/Principal:	David Murden
Hub:	London Special and AP Hub
School phase:	Early Years to Key Stage 5
MAT (if applicable):	Sutton Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	N/A
Date of this Review:	02/02/2026
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	Effective
Date of last QA Review:	02/05/2025
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	09/05/2024

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 N/A

Quality of provision and outcomes N/A

AND

Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with additional needs N/A

Area of excellence N/A

Previously accredited valid areas of excellence N/A

Overall peer evaluation estimate N/A

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

Sherwood Foundation School (SFS) is based on three separate campuses in the London Borough of Sutton. The third of these opened in September 2025. Together they comprise a special school for pupils aged from four to 19, with complex physical, medical and/or learning challenges. A high proportion are autistic. Pupils come from Sutton and four other local authorities.

All the learners have education, health and care plans (EHCPs) for their special educational needs (SEND). The proportions of learners whose families have financial or social disadvantage, including recent arrival in England or English as an additional language are much higher than the national average.

The school and complexities of learners' needs have grown over recent years. Consequently, the number of staff has grown. The school has developed a strong transdisciplinary approach, in which, teaching staff work in very close partnership with a range of professionals including speech, play and occupational therapists. The school is part of the Sutton Education Trust, an informal federation with several local mainstream primary schools.

Leadership consists of a substantive executive headteacher, a head of strategy, headteachers and assistant headteachers of each campus.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Leaders share clear and coherent values and ethos. These pivot around their main aim of 'breaking the mould' or mitigating against barriers to learners' progress, health and development. The values of 'LEARN'; listening, enabling, accepting, respecting and nurturing and the process of 'Self-Reg' underpin all that the school provides.
- Leaders have developed a comprehensive core offer of continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers, senior teaching assistants and teaching assistants. This has a high priority across all campuses, raising the subject knowledge, skills and understanding of all teaching staff. As one teaching assistant said, 'I now understand what pedagogy means for our learners.'

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- The transdisciplinary therapeutic partnership (TDT) between therapists and teaching staff is integral to learners' progress and development. Together, therapists and teaching staff conduct thorough assessments of all learners, contribute rigorously to pedagogy, the curriculum and outcomes.
- The climate and priority for learners' progress and development are a core priority for all staff. Administrative staff spoke of progress they had seen in all learners including those with the most complex needs. They said that learner engagement in lessons is tangible especially when their experiences are enriched through music.
- 'Baseline', 'Curriculum' and 'Holistic' assessments are extensive and thorough. The information gleaned and subsequent adaptations are life transforming for learners and their families. For example, a new learner with motor planning and obsessive-compulsive difficulties (OCD) who could not access unfamiliar places, now engages with the school, the class, the community and even the Christmas Fair.
- Learners of all ages frequently visit numerous places in the community, such as the farm, local shops and residential trips. These extend their progress, enjoyment and life skills as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Wellbeing practitioners often attend to enable learners with the most complex disadvantage or SEND to engage.
- Through contributing to life beyond SFS learners are becoming active citizens of modern Britain. Some older learners are 'defib champions' checking that defibrillators in the community are complete and working whilst others are working with a community project to create pieces of art for wider display.
- The wellbeing of learners and staff underpins the school's ethos and success. The school's core wellbeing offer includes 'wellbeing and regulation', 'communication', 'play and leisure' and 'independence'. Wellbeing practitioners provide additional specialist support to enhance this for learners with the most complex needs. Additionally, they provide interventions such as Play Therapy, Rebound Therapy and ARFID assessments. These practitioners also work with parents and those in other schools as part of SFS's outreach provision.
- Positive relationships, an increasingly well-adapted curriculum and refined pedagogy enhance learners' progress, development and character. This is evident in 'pupil voice' documents, which present pupils' strengths and barriers as well as their preferences. A Year 13 learner wrote, 'I like regulation and I want to go to college'. After careful discussion and consideration, plans are now underway for him to leave school a year earlier than anticipated to go to Carshalton College.

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

- ... leaders found more ways to celebrate their successes and demonstrate positive impact with people within and beyond the school.
- ... leaders were able to collate assessment data from all three campuses more easily, possibly developing a single system to provide reports for analysis to share with different stakeholders.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- After carefully considering many different models, leaders are refining a whole-school, relevant, coherent curriculum which includes all national curriculum subjects as well as additions such as play and leisure. Teaching staff adapt resources and pedagogy to provide access for all. In Key Stages 4 and 5, those with the most complex needs are studying history and showing a real interest and intrigue in Henry VIII.
- Literacy and mathematics have a high priority within the school's broad curriculum. These are imaginatively incorporated into practical lessons such as science and art. Consequently, pupils participate and engage. Teaching staff carefully pointed to letters of the alphabet as younger learners moved to the rhythm of a video about their names and sounds. Older learners wrote about tasks and experiences for their ASDAN accreditation.
- Resources are imaginative, good quality and appropriately accessible helping learners' progress, choice and independence. Teaching staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) had made props to support the story of 'The very hungry caterpillar.' Learners selected, explored and tasted different fruits as they appeared in the tale and fed some of these to a hungry caterpillar made from green tissue paper and a cardboard box.
- Through in-depth assessment and professional skill, staff are highly attuned to the individual needs of learners. This enables them to read and interpret learners' behaviour and advocate on their behalf. Pupils successfully learn strategies to help them remain regulated in and beyond the school. A wide variety of resources, including beanbags, trampettes and sensory tools, are readily available to support this. In one lesson a learner who was becoming restless jumped up from the mat and immediately went to the trampette to jump independently.

- Regular routines, such as opening music and visual timetables, are clearly embedded into lessons. Activities such as songs and visuals help learners to transition smoothly from one activity to another. One learner recognised the music cue for news and was very excited to share his personal experience with others.
- Staff support learners patiently, skilfully and sensitively. Peers are kind and helpful to each other. When an older learner became dysregulated, one in the class was flustered or distracted from their work. The teacher provided some tactile 'squeezies' to calm the pupil and the lesson continued.
- Pupils' communication, contributions and views are encouraged and valued. Staff positively rejoiced when, in response to a member of staff asking if pupils enjoyed making a lava lamp in science, the pupils, using their augmentative communication systems, said 'no' because they had wanted to choose their own colours rather than all making blue ones. They will do this next time.
- Attendance is above average for special schools because staff monitor this closely and use bespoke, relational strategies to address difficulties. Most learners enjoy school. One wrote 'I like going into the community and swimming'.
- Relationships are warm, respectful and supportive. Staff training to help learners manage 'stress behaviour' focuses on self-help de-escalation and strategies rather than rules and restraints. This has proved highly positive. As a member of staff said, 'No restraint really is possible'.

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

- ... learners were encouraged, even more frequently, to develop independence and self-efficacy skills beyond directed learning intentions, in and out of lessons.
- ... teaching staff adapted tasks, even more finely, to meet learners' bespoke needs and help them achieve even more.
- ... there was an even clearer difference between Key Stages 4 & 5, for example, in how older learners are addressed.

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

- Leaders have worked very effectively with wider groups, including the local authority, to provide for learners who were not previously in maintained schools. The invaluable TDT partnerships are enabling them to meet these pupils' bespoke, highly complex medical, social, emotional and academic needs increasingly well.
- The aspirations of staff for all learners, including those with the most complex needs, along with their growing commitment to see beyond challenges and work with others to meet holistic needs, are evident. Staff affirm differences and mitigate against barriers. An older learner with highly complex SEND wore a full body sock to provide pressure and comfort as he worked on the computer.
- Inclusion and engagement of staff and learners, including those who are most disadvantaged, are central priorities for all leaders. They proactively seek partnerships which can enhance their capacity and skill. Having identified that questions about equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) often brought the weakest responses in staff interviews, leaders initiated links with a project called the 'Belonging Effect'. This is successfully developing staff awareness, understanding and skills in addressing EDI, including 'decolonising the curriculum', 'racial literacy' and microaggressions. This is impacting positively on staff and learners.
- Staff respect and build on learners' preferences and sensitivities. They intentionally carry key resources in backpacks as they move around the school so that they can work with identified learners, wherever they may be. This shows how well staff take learners' specific needs into account.
- Additionally, leaders have introduced a new support pathway to meet the most complex needs. An older learner who was too anxious and overstimulated to transition to class was able to learn in the corridor, his place of choice, as the teaching assistant and occupational therapist used resources with him there. As leaders said, 'LEARNing is everywhere'.
- Positive relationships and rapport enable staff to support highly disadvantaged learners. High levels of engagement and a love of learning are evident. When a learner momentarily became dysregulated in an activity, a senior teaching assistant first allowed processing time and then responded in a calm, understanding way. The learner calmed and re-engaged in learning very quickly.

- Disadvantaged pupils and those with the most complex needs develop positive behaviour and attitudes because staff see beyond their difficulties, are aspirational and support them well. The school values all forms of communication and provides learners with a wide range of systems including augmentative devices for this. For example, a range of learners on each campus are trialling and developing their skills with high-tech alternative and augmentative communication (AAC).

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

- ... teaching staff ensured that resources were always suitable for all learners and maximised their access to tasks.

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>)