



## QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

### REVIEW REPORT FOR ORCHARD MEAD ACADEMY

<b>Name of School:</b>	Orchard Mead Academy
<b>Headteacher/Principal:</b>	Mark Oldman
<b>Hub:</b>	East Midlands South
<b>School phase:</b>	Secondary
<b>MAT (if applicable):</b>	The Mead Education Trust (TMET)

<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:</b>	Effective
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	06/12/2021
<b>Overall Estimate at last QA Review</b>	Effective
<b>Date of last QA Review</b>	29/01/2020
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	N/a new school since 2017 Predecessor school - inadequate
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	11/10/2016 (predecessor school)



## **1. Context and character of the school**

Orchard Mead Academy officially opened in 2017 as a new academy formed from Hamilton College. It is part of The Mead Educational Trust (TMET). The school is larger than the average-sized 11-16 secondary school. The school benefitted from a rebuild in 2014 and is based within a modern, bright building. The site also comprises accommodation for The Grove, the school's specialist social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) provision. The school serves a diverse local community in the north east of Leicester.

Orchard Mead Academy educates pupils from Year 7 to Year 11. The proportion of pupils in the disadvantaged group is above the national figures and the proportion for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is broadly triple the national figures. The overall proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is above the national figures, although those with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) are in line with the national figures. There have been several headteachers in the last few years. The current headteacher took up post in September 2021, although he was already working with the school in his role of Director of Education for TMET. Everyone involved with the school 'works together to make a positive difference.' This is exemplified in the Orchard Oath to 'work hard, be kind and be responsible.'

### **2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well**

- Together, leaders have already achieved the headteacher's vision of a stable, warm and welcoming school. This has been particularly important given the school's recent leadership instability. Everyone expressed their pride in belonging to 'something special'.
- Leaders share a passion to secure rapid improvement. They ensure that whole school initiatives are very well embedded. For example, the most recent drive to ensure consistent behaviour for learning in all lessons. Leaders deliberately automate basic lesson routines around following instruction, answering questions and sitting properly. Everyone refers to this confidently as 'FAST'. Leaders' success in this strategy has led to a reduction in behaviour incidents.
- Leaders clearly articulate the rationale for rapid change. Leaders at all levels buy in to the whole school ethos, presenting as one voice. Middle leaders refer to themselves as the 'engine room of change'.

- Middle leaders feel trusted and respected to make decisions within their own subject areas. They are regarded as experts in their subjects. Curriculum planning is ambitious, sequenced and cohesive. The result is that students are able to articulate what they are learning and why.
- Leaders' development of the school's 'growth curriculum' drives the school culture and sense of belonging. The curriculum is delivered through a variety of vehicles including timetabled lessons, assemblies and tutor time. Students enjoy learning about their place in the world in relation to others. For example, students are learning how prejudice can stem from different religious beliefs and customs. This has led to increased attendance and participation in extra-curricular clubs.
- Inclusion is a high priority for leaders. The school has developed use of its own vulnerability index. This index enables early identification of students with additional needs. The school also has inclusion expertise from the school's designated specialist unit, The Grove. Leaders at all levels are increasingly using this expertise to apply a school-wide graduated response to meet the needs of all students.
- Leaders extend the concept of inclusion and community to parents. Leaders contact parents of vulnerable students when they identify potential barriers. They offer bespoke help, such as providing school uniform, sanitary products and food parcels. Parents increasingly trust the school and ask for help to support their children. As a result, attendance from the most disadvantaged students has improved.
- Governors take an active role, challenging and supporting leaders on school improvement priorities. They recently interviewed and appointed the first 25 prefects.
- Leadership of careers education is a celebrated strength. Leaders offer a broad careers programme that meets all the Gatsby benchmarks. External auditors have rated the quality of this programme as high. The school is anticipating a Gold award for the 'Quality in Careers Mark'. As a consequence, all but two students have sustained destinations. This is a significant improvement on previous years.

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

...there was a joined up approach between interventions for reading delivered outside the classroom and what happens within lessons. A reading strategy at subject level should build on the success already achieved with the catch-up reading strategies.

...middle leaders better communicated to teachers about the specific access to learning strategies for students with additional needs.

### 3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- All teachers successfully require students to follow the new school routines of FAST. In the classroom, students behave well and follow teacher instructions. Students understand how the routines help them to learn better. This success has transformed the school's learning environment.
- Middle leaders have adapted curriculum plans in a number of areas to sequence learning to build knowledge. For example, when discussing A Christmas Carol as gothic literature in English, students referred back to their previous reading of A Woman in Black to recall gothic vocabulary.
- Students engage in learning. Vulnerable students in an English lesson were keen to read Macbeth in character as a witch and at the front of the class. In a Year 10 lower ability class, the vast majority read together. One student quickly found and read out a relevant quotation, showing that he remembered what he had previously read.
- Students can explain how they are learning about navigating and dealing with life situations. This is as a result of the school's growth curriculum. When asked, one student could skilfully explain the difference between morals and laws. She explained that laws were often written instructions for how to live in a particular country. In contrast, she felt that morals were more cultural and often unwritten.
- The community ethos comes through strongly when students explain their sense of belonging. This has led to a powerful community action to raise aspiration. The student voice team reflected on the pride they felt when raising money for Afghanistan refugees. Students spoke of a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as being part of the student council or talks from university speakers, employers and employees. Older students are very keen to give something back to younger years.
- Access to online learning is robust. The school solved community disadvantage by providing over two thirds of students with Chromebooks and internet connection.
- In English, standards of writing skills are high in both short and extended writing. Students practise analysing texts frequently. Their work is well structured. Consequently, students show good skills when analysing text in writing. Students take care and show pride in their work.
- All students read daily during tutor time. The texts are high quality and support themes in the growth curriculum. For example, Year 8 form classes are reading Malorie Blackman's Noughts and Crosses in tutor time whilst also learning about prejudice in their growth lessons.

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

...the 'I do' model was used to show teachers' thinking so that students were encouraged to think about and discuss the choices made by the teacher.

...teachers systematically questioned students in such a way that (i) all students offered answers confidently and accurately rather than only the few students who raise their hands and (ii) gave students frequent opportunities to work together before answering questions.

...students understood where they are in the learning journey and what is coming next. Some students found it difficult to explain what they need to do to improve, despite the teacher feedback in their books.

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

- The growth curriculum develops the whole child and tackles issues of disadvantage head on. Pupils spoke positively about how this improves behaviour. They value understanding how to be a good citizen and how to deal with life issues such as mental health and gambling.
- Staff signpost students towards extra-curricular provision that has been planned around the local community. The school has worked with local community clubs to use their facilities at highly reduced rates. As a result, participation in sports clubs is healthy. The school also has an army cadet group.
- Leaders are improving the provision for students with additional needs as a whole school priority. The quality assurance of learning includes the provision for students with additional needs. One example is that faculties must always use the dyslexia font.
- The SENDco is increasing support to help teachers meet student needs, such as improved pupil profiles which outline specific strategies. She has written guidance on how teachers should use teaching assistants (TAs).
- The SENDco runs literacy and mental health interventions in conjunction with faculties. Students show strong relationships with their teachers and are positive about the interventions. Impact will be measured termly.
- The Grove's provision and outcomes for students with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs is exceptional. Students from the main school notice that The Grove supports a change in student behaviour. Exclusions have reduced significantly.

- Students attend intervention classes to help them catch-up in their reading. They catch-up by nine to fourteen months a term using Accelerated Reader.

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

...the SENDco extended her successful work with the English and humanities departments by working with other faculties to (i) develop their curriculum and resources for students with additional needs (ii) ensure teachers were consistent in their use of student profile information to inform planning and to ensure access, support and stretch and (iii) all teachers understood how to plan for and use TAs effectively in their classroom.

### **5. Area of Excellence**

**The Grove:** Designated Specialist Provision (DSP) for Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

#### **Accredited**

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

The Grove is making a significant difference to the lives and future chances of the students who attend. It aims to widen this impact to more students, to students with different needs in the main school and to other schools nationally. The Grove's existence is an innovative achievement in itself and serves as a model of provision for other schools to replicate. Furthermore, the systems and philosophy are simple yet highly effective in improving student outcomes.

The Grove has already re-integrated almost a third of its students back into main school education. These students were on a trajectory for exclusion and alternative provision. Other students are on a partially integrated timetable where some of their learning takes place within the main school.

Leaders attribute this success to their graduated systems and to the training for mainstream teachers. In order to support re-integration, the provision uses middle leaders from the main school to teach the students. This helps staff and students adjust.

Staff have been trained to use language and behaviours that foster positive work relationships with students. Consequently, they have developed trust with students using an honest narrative around kindness, success and difficulties. Leaders have designed the curriculum to work alongside the main school curriculum but with more cross-curricular links to reinforce understanding.

The expertise for the provision's success has come from leaders' experience in leading special schools. The approach draws on the philosophy of unconditional positive regard. The provision shares this expertise within the trust. The Chartered College of Teaching will be publishing an abstract about how the provision creates an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

## **5.2 What evidence is there of the impact on students' outcomes?**

Leaders measure impact via a range of qualitative and quantitative measures. These include progress against EHCP targets, reward points gained, teacher assessment grades and student voice. All pupils are making positive progress on every measure. The main aim is for students to return to full time mainstream education. For a third of students, this has already been achieved in a short period of time. For the remaining, absence and fixed term exclusions have dropped significantly. Since September, they have increased their number of lessons in the main school sevenfold.

Importantly, students have learned to be active citizens as part of The Grove community. They take part in weekly celebration assemblies in which they congratulate peers' achievements. This has become important to them. Recently, students elected to stay late in order to take part in an assembly that had been cancelled that morning.

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

Name: Ali Williams

Title: Associate Assistant Principal

Email: [awilliams@orchard-tmet.uk](mailto:awilliams@orchard-tmet.uk)

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

To be put in contact with any schools that have:

- wide and varying outreach schemes that are long established and successful.
- improved rapidly and have a similar proportion of disadvantaged and EAL students.

**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.**

**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 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.**