



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR ORCHARD MEAD ACADEMY

Name of School:	Orchard Mead Academy
Headteacher/Principal:	Subrina Johal
Hub:	East Midlands South Hub
School phase:	Secondary
MAT (if applicable):	The Mead Educational Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Effective
Date of this Review:	04/03/2024
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Effective
Date of last QA Review	06/12/2021
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	08/02/2022



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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	Effective

AND

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

Area of excellence Not submitted for this review

Previously accredited valid areas of excellence The Grove – Designated Specialist Provision for Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.
06/12/2021

Overall peer evaluation estimate Effective

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

Orchard Mead Academy is a large 11-16 mixed comprehensive school with just over 1000 students on role. It is a member of the Mead Educational Trust, which it joined in September 2017, and is located in an area of high social deprivation in the East of the city of Leicester. Well over a third of students fall into the disadvantaged group although in reality, many other families are eligible for support but for a variety of reasons do not claim it. Reflecting Leicester's diverse ethnic community. White British remains the largest group although almost half of the students have English as an additional language (EAL). 53 mother languages are spoken across the school with Gujarati being the most common. A larger than average proportion of the school population has special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); the number with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) is above average and on the increase. The stability measure is high with a sizeable number of students leaving or joining the academy mid-year.

The school has an on-site Designated Specialist Provision – The Grove – catering for a small number of students with more profound SEN, for example SEMH difficulties. Returning these students to part- or full-time mainstream education is the primary aim of the provision. For a significant number, however, their needs are too extreme for mainstream education, and they await placements in specialist schools.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The school benefits from a strong, passionate principal and a knowledgeable senior leadership team (SLT). Together, they lead by example and share the school and Trust visions. The SLT has expert understanding of the demographic of their students and thus go the extra mile to ensure that they are fully prepared for life after Orchard Mead Academy. The plethora of successful student support strategies they have devised and implemented are testimony to their hard work.
- Leaders have worked hard to develop a sense of belonging at the school. This is raising students' aspirations and encouraging them to be the best they can possibly be. There is a good deal of discussion about life choices to boost students' understanding of how the world works after they have left school. Leaders' main aim is that students should leave with the best levels of literacy and numeracy possible to give them improved life chances.
- The fellowship within the Trust is clearly evident where resources, expertise and workload are shared across the different schools, providing valuable support. Principals meet frequently so that collaborative relationships abound.

As the principal at Orchard Mead stated, 'we're all in it together!' highlighting the level of mutual support and cooperation, resulting in shared accountability. This corroborates the Trust motto "Together We Make a Positive Difference."

- There is a robust and consistent quality-assurance system in the school. Subject leaders have autonomy to direct this in a way that it best suits their department with the proviso that it aligns with whole school monitoring practices and culminates in helpful information. They comprise a strong group of leaders. With all the data that is collected, feedback to teachers is highly supportive and useful in developing their pedagogy.
- Steplab is an online portal used at the school so that every member of staff has a mentor and they are observed in their teaching. This has been helpful in celebrating success and giving useful instructional coaching to staff to improve their performance in class. The principal observed, 'we believe everyone can get better – it is non-threatening, and this methodology is having a positive impact in driving up standards of teaching and learning.
- Disciplinary literacy has been a major focus across the school, using EEF research as the basis for implementation. Departments have been given opportunities to discuss and explore how this aspect relates to their subject and it is becoming embedded. This was evident in a Year 7 science lesson where students were using terms such as 'aerobic respiration' and the components of the respiratory system like 'trachea' and 'bronchioles.' This strategy is beginning to tackle the significant proportion of students whose reading ages are below their chronological age.
- Most subjects adopt a spiral curriculum model while mathematics opts for a hierarchical version. These methods work effectively, and they not only highlight core skills and knowledge that students need to learn, they also help non-specialist line managers to monitor and evaluate assessment in the subjects they oversee.

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

... senior leaders organised training for staff to effectively embed peer-on-peer discussion to increase the student ratio of participation in lessons.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Routines are well developed in classrooms and students enter the room ready to learn with Do Now tasks set up for them to commence their learning. The FAST system is apparent in all lessons where students are expected to –

Follow the speaker, Answer questions well, Sit up straight, Take responsibility. They know this approach well and respond in the correct way.

- Teachers have strong subject knowledge, utilising their expertise to the full to guide and extend students' learning. Mutual respect is a key feature at Orchard Mead, resulting in highly positive student/teacher relationships and a calm, orderly learning environment.
- High expectations for students' contribution to lessons were evident in many instances. This was particularly visible in a Year 9 English class where the teacher was not satisfied with the basic answer a student gave so she pushed the student to expand on her response in greater depth.
- Visualisers are frequently used by teachers to guide and model learning for students. In a Year 11 Growth (PSHE) class, the teacher used this apparatus to provide framed feedback to questions and in a Year 8 history lesson, the teacher was able to model the required response in the moment.
- Questioning in the best lessons probes students' knowledge and understanding effectively. Cold calling is commonly used to keep students in a state of preparedness should they be asked a question.
- Positive attitudes to learning abound and reflect the concerted efforts leaders have made to make a positive change to the atmosphere for learning. Students are fully engaged in their learning, especially in the "I do, We do" sections of the content.
- Students are very proud of their school and recognise all of the positive changes that have taken place in recent times. A Year 10 student clearly expressed his thoughts about his school. As an accomplished musician he said, 'When I arrived in the school (from Nigeria) I fell in love with the music department, so I started a band.' Others who were spoken to said there were no EBIs at the school!
- Staff set high expectations of the students in terms of behaviour and resources. For example, in Year 11, there is the Everything All The Time strategy, where students have to observe some basic rules to enhance their learning and to avoid sanctions. However, this is countered by the notion of "Clarity is Kindness" so that students have no misconceptions as to what is expected of them.
- The whole school focus on developing reading and literacy was evident in most lessons. The introduction of higher tier vocabulary was a common feature in task design and content. This was most notable in a Year 8 geography lesson where terms such as 'pyroclastic flow' were commonly used by students working on the aftermath of volcanic eruptions. This example highlights that the well-planned, ambitious reading strategy is impacting all areas and bodes well for the future intention for the school to become a Reading School.

- There has been a focus on homework and the school has used Satchel software to develop key content and vocabulary that is pertinent to the different subjects. Staff have flexibility in the way it is enacted across the school. The mathematics department uses the Sparks programme as it is more relevant to that subject. Completion of homework can be remotely monitored to show that students have at least tried to complete it. This ties in with the ethos that homework is a route for students to get better. These approaches are often self-marked so that teacher workload is reduced.
- Behaviour at the school is generally strong and there is a calm, orderly atmosphere throughout. Students conduct themselves sensibly because they align with the school's expectations. Leaders have liaised closely with parents of some students to further engage their support, and this is having considerable effect. Pupil Passports for key students enable teachers to have a better understanding about these students, their backgrounds and what strategies can be more effectively used in class to help and guide them.

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

- ... leaders at all levels developed teachers' knowledge of, and use of, the "You Do" strategy to support deeper thinking and independent work in lessons.
- ... staff continued to re-visit different questioning techniques to ensure that learning has taken place through greater checking for understanding.
- ... teachers and leaders at all levels ensured that lessons were appropriately pitched to challenge students of all abilities.

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

- The provision for disadvantaged students is well established, particularly because almost half of the school population falls into this group. Removing barriers to learning has been a main focus, for example by increasing reading age and literacy skills. This has had success, as has the supply of laptops and dongles to enable these students to work at home. Attendance for this group has been problematic and the school has employed a family support worker to improve this aspect. She is already getting hard-to-reach students into school because she works tenaciously on establishing positive relationships with their parents.
- Strategies to boost the achievement of disadvantaged students are having a positive effect and the gap between them and their non-disadvantaged peers

is reducing. However, the literacy/reading strategies that are not yet fully embedded need longer to have a lasting improvement.

- Financial support is available to these students to enable them to take part in visits and trips, ensuring that they have full access to them. The school also purchases books to give to them as presents at Christmas.
- Many disadvantaged students remain after school for extra-curricular clubs and/or academic interventions. Part of the attraction for this is attending Cozy Club afterwards where they receive a hot meal.
- The SENDCo is relatively new to the school but comes with vast experience in this area. This ensures that provision for these students is appropriate to their individual needs.
- The Panel meeting that occurs every three weeks guarantees that these students remain a high priority and their progress is always thoroughly discussed. Curriculum adaptations are minimal but where they occur, they are devised to support students more effectively. Levels of homework are also appropriate so that undue expectations are not placed on students and their academic progress from their starting points is enhanced.
- Students with EAL range from fluent speakers to those completely new to English. Strong interventions and support ensure that all levels of these students receive the correct guidance. The use of the online Flash Academy software is gainfully employed where necessary to support them and Pupil Passports for them help teaching staff to work with them. Data shows the positive impact that these strategies are having, for example through improved literacy and understanding, and greater engagement with the life of the school.

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

... leaders continued to focus on and improve attendance for disadvantaged students.

5. Area of Excellence

Not submitted for this review.



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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>)