



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR ORCHARD MEAD ACADEMY

Name of School:	Orchard Mead Academy
Principal:	Subrina Johal
Hub:	East Midlands South
School phase:	Secondary
MAT (if applicable):	N/A

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Effective
Date of this Review:	10/03/2025
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Effective
Date of last QA Review	04/03/2024
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, agrees 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	N/A
Previously accredited valid areas of excellence	N/A
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

Orchard Mead Academy is a large 11-16 mixed comprehensive school with just over 1,100 students on roll. It joined the Mead Educational Trust in September 2017, which has five secondary and eight primary schools. It is located in an area of high social deprivation on the eastern edge of Leicester.

Two fifths of students are disadvantaged, although this does not reflect the true number. Over one third of students face complex difficulties that make them vulnerable. Three fifths of students come from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds. A large proportion of students speak English as an additional language, with 59 different first languages.

The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) is above the national average and rising. The school has opened an on-site Designated Specialist Provision (DSP) for six Year 7 students with communication and interaction needs. This provision also has six students with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) between Year 9 and Year 11.

The Orchard Oath of **Work Hard, Be Kind, Be Responsible** provides a framework for personal conduct and growth for students.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Leaders take appropriate action to bring about improvements, such as over reading and attendance. A student said, 'When the school sees a problem, they fix it.' Leaders undertake considerable research to ensure new initiatives are underpinned by a secure evidence base.
- Teachers enjoy the flexibility of the school's continuing professional development (CPD) programmes. They like the opportunities to visit other classes to see best practice and for people to visit them.
- Leaders' strategic decision to introduce a whole-school reading programme is having a positive impact. This involves teachers pre-teaching the vocabulary explicitly, choral repetition of the words and their definition, the teacher modelling reading from the text and questions to check students' understanding. Teachers are brave in taking this on because morally it is the right thing to do, even though in some cases it was not originally their area of expertise. Students can articulate why the programme has been set up relating to their reading ages and value the difference it is making to them.

- Instructional coaching is proving successful. Teachers have a consistent coach through the year. There are 15 cycles in the year. This has been especially effective in the science department, which was the trial group. Two thirds of teachers are able to engage in the coaching cycles consistently.
- Leaders are doing everything they can to support attendance. Consequently, they have adopted a very wide range of attendance strategies. They work very closely with families and provide support and incentives to encourage students to come to school. This year attendance is up on last year and moving close to the national average.
- Leaders have established a caring culture where everybody feels valued. A student said, 'The school finds a way to help everybody. We rarely have problems but if we do we go to staff and they help us sort them out.' They said that staff are there for them.
- Faculties have a clear intent and implementation of their curriculum, with high expectations of all students. Leaders have ensured a consistent approach to pedagogy, with the same principles of instruction across different subjects.
- Leaders are flexible and responsive, taking on board suggestions from staff and looking for emerging issues, such as banning mobile phones. Students also said staff listen to their opinions and make changes accordingly, such as fixing hooks on the backs of the toilet doors.
- The school provides a wide range of experiences for the students. Students can use the sports hall and gym from 7.30am in the morning. The breakfast club has won an award for being the most well attended. Students go on visits to France, including disadvantaged students. Visiting speakers and workshops are sometimes guided by the school's data on particular issues.
- The Trust has been very supportive of the school and there are strong networks across the Trust. The Trust has also provided or sourced additional funding for school initiatives.
- Careers education runs throughout the school, with many opportunities for students, meeting all the Gatsby Benchmarks. Students feel well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

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

... N/A

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Students engage well with learning and are receptive and responsive to instructions. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics lesson, students used whiteboards and calculators to help them calculate the perimeter of a shape. They were guided by the teacher, and some chose to draw the shape first.
- Teachers have established very clear routines. Students know what to do as soon as they walk in. In many classes they have a 'do now' task to complete, such as naming the different parts of the ukulele in music or reflecting on a training exercise they had led in physical education.
- Students benefit from the teachers modelling learning. This happened in Year 10 English when the teacher used a visualiser to show the arguments for and against having a common room for Year 10 and 11 students. In Year 8 history the teacher modelled some key information about the colonisation of Australia and its impact on the aborigine population.
- Teachers make effective use of questioning to probe students' learning. In top set biology the teacher probed students' answers about what exactly the equilibrium meant in an equation about yield and production of ammonia in a plant.
- In classrooms teachers make resources and equipment well organised and accessible. Students have ready access to whiteboards, workbooks and visualisers. This equips them to start work as soon as they enter and not a moment is wasted.
- Students' behaviour is strong around the school and in class. Teachers warmly welcome them into the classrooms so that lessons get off to a positive start. Students were happy to talk to visitors and showed pride in their work. They were confident and could talk about their learning. For example, in Year 10, art students were recreating a piece of work in the style of an artist that inspired them and very proud of what they were creating. One student had gone to an aquarium to take pictures of sea creatures to inform his work.
- The school's new reading initiative places literacy at the heart of its work. Students receive daily reading lessons in addition to their work across the curriculum. There has been considerable investment in planning the programme and training staff, as well as preparing excellent resources. The workbooks for the novels embed all the questions and provide very thorough strategies for teachers and students to analyse high quality text.

- Cold calling is well established and keeps students alert and ready to respond. For example, in Year 7 English, the teacher asked individual students to give their answers to questions based on the word 'vulnerable'.
- School staff know the students very well. This promotes strong relationships. One teacher said, 'The relationships you build with the students keep you here.' Another said, 'You feel you have a real connection with the students; they respond so well to you.'
- As students grow in confidence, they are willing to ask for help in class. Teachers check their understanding and fill in gaps where they know they have missed learning, for example through absence.
- The diversity and cultural richness of students' backgrounds are celebrated throughout the year with celebrations and festivals. For example, during the review, 70 people joined together to break their fast for Ramadan with an Iftar meal. The school enjoys a harmonious culture, where everyone belongs.

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

- ... staff continued to work to improve attendance in order to raise outcomes.
- ... faculties developed the curriculum further so that all areas are as strong as the best.
- ... teachers ensured that the reading programme is embedded and quantified its success.

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

- Adapted curriculum materials enable students to move between the DSP and mainstream classes because they are following the same curriculum. For example, in English they all study Shakespeare's villains and Oliver Twist. The workbooks are adapted for those students working in the DSP.
- The SENDCo is experienced, astute and has a powerful vision for positive outcomes and life chances for students with SEND. The DSP has been moved into the heart of the school so that students feel part of the community and it easy for them to join with mainstream students. A student said, 'It's awesome!' when joining the Year 9 mathematics class.
- Students within the DSP attend school well: they enjoy what they are doing and are keen to come. The outdoor garden for the SEND department is calm and well cared for, often tended by the students.

- Students with SEND are integrated into the school community. Several took leading parts in the recent school production of Matilda.
- Leaders of SEND are open to evaluation and input. There have been three reviews of SEND provision in the last six months by the Trust and the local authority. These were all positive. The SENDCo also undertakes reviews in other schools.
- A weekly meeting takes place with support staff to discuss the progress of students. They also raise any matters relating to other students they have identified from their work in classes.
- Teachers have high expectations of disadvantaged students and those with additional needs, ensuring they meet the same curriculum objectives as other students. For example, in science, the teacher provided different coloured booklets and overlays for students with SEND so they could access the curriculum.
- In Year 8 mathematics, the teacher moved around the classroom to target disadvantaged students, ensuring they were engaged with the task of finding the perimeter of shapes. The teacher asked them to explain the task, checking for understanding to prevent misconceptions.
- Students disadvantaged by low attendance are supported and encouraged well. There have been 1,900 home visits so far this year. Members of staff present a familiar face at the student entrance to welcome them into school and deal with any issues straight away.

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

... teachers ensured that curriculum implementation is consistent for the most vulnerable learners in all lessons.

5 Area of Excellence

N/A

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



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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>).