



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR RUSHEY MEAD ACADEMY

Name of School:	Rushey Mead Academy
Principal:	Vicky Barwell
Hub:	East Midlands South Hub
School phase:	Secondary
MAT (if applicable):	The Mead Educational Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Not applicable
Date of this Review:	05/02/2025
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Not applicable
Date of last QA Review	07/02/2024
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	08/03/2022

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 Not applicable

Quality of provision and outcomes Not applicable

AND

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

Area of excellence The quality of education in history
Accredited

Previously accredited valid areas of excellence The science curriculum, teaching and learning and student outcomes, 07/02/2024. Using pupil premium to support disadvantaged students to achieve outstanding outcomes, 01/02/2023. Curriculum beyond the classroom, 25/02/2022

Overall peer evaluation estimate Not applicable

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

Rushey Mead is an above average sized, 11 - 16 mixed secondary school. It is oversubscribed, exceeding the designated twelve-form entry in every year group.

Located in the city of Leicester in a modern purpose-built building, the school is in an area of above average deprivation. However, student deprivation indicators are close to average, with the proportion of disadvantaged students below the national average. A large proportion of the student population is of Asian heritage. The proportion of students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is well above the national average. Student mobility is low.

The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below the national average. The proportion of students with an education, health and care plan is also below the national average. This year, a designated special provision (DSP) supporting students with communication difficulties has been added to the school's provision.

Rushey Mead is an academy converter and an original school of The Mead Educational Trust. The school's approach is for everyone to work together to 'make a positive difference' to themselves, others and the world. This is encapsulated in the school's three core values: be kind, work hard, and develop your whole self.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Leaders respond effectively to suggested improvements. This can be seen in the school's continued development of their oracy and literacy strategies and an ongoing commitment to seeking out local and national best practice.
- Leaders refer to the school as the 'Rushey family'. This collective sense of commitment and belonging begins with the principal, who leads the school with purpose and passion. As a result, her drive and compassion permeate the entire school.
- Leaders have high expectations of themselves and others. They deliberately over-narrate the Rushey values, SMART expectations (smile, manners, articulate, respect and titles) and the Rushey Way of doing things to create a strong and inclusive culture where students understand what is expected of them and why.
- Curriculum leaders value their autonomy to develop subject provision in line with best practice for their discipline. Consequently, students benefit from the consistency of common values, expectations and routines while receiving deliberately adapted learning opportunities in each subject. Leaders' bespoke application of the whole school 'high 5' literacy strategy is just one example of this.
- Leaders encourage critical reflection at all levels to inform school improvement. As a result, leaders are open and transparent about what is

working well and what they are working to develop and improve. This approach can be seen in the school's approach to quality assurance, which embraces the priorities of curriculum leaders and is supported through evidence gathering and professional dialogue.

- Leaders provide a range of professional learning (PL) to support staff development at all levels. This is consistently grounded in educational research so that staff understand why developments are necessary and are then able to determine how these can be applied to their specialisms.
- Academy Councillors make a significant contribution to the school's leadership and embody its values and culture. This year, they have attended the Literacy PL sessions and participated in a range of quality assurance activities, offering suggestions, support and challenge such as piloting a Year 7 reading buddy programme and using artificial intelligence to develop student literacy.
- Leaders recognise the importance of regular communication with each other and the school community. This is exemplified in the work of pastoral leaders who operate effectively as 'teams around a year group' to ensure students in their care are safe, seen and supported. Consequently, leaders can ensure interventions are timely and appropriate.
- Pastoral leaders have established daily routines deliberately designed to embed the Rushey values. As Year 9 students listened to the morning address outside their tutor rooms, pastoral staff explained how the focus on children's mental health week resonated with being kind. This was then discussed in greater detail as part of tutor time.

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

None emerged on this review.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- The Rushey principles of instruction inform best practice in teaching and learning across the school. Subject teachers use their professional expertise to apply this best practice to individual subject grids. The result is a teaching and learning framework that is common to all yet carefully adapted to accommodate disciplinary differences.
- Lessons reflect ambitious and coherent curriculum planning with careful consideration given to developing students' disciplinary knowledge and skills. As a result, history students were being taught about historical interpretations of the Silk Road while in Year 7. In food technology, the teacher had closely linked the food theory with the practice of making muffins, enabling students to better understand the processes involved.
- Teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge, enabling students to develop a rich knowledge and deep understanding of the concepts and

content being taught. In a Year 11 history lesson on the Cold War, the teacher shared unique insights about the crises, highlighting that it was the closest we have been to pressing the nuclear button. In a Year 9 science lesson, the teacher took a simple multiple-choice question about mean calculation and extended it to include an exploration of the idea and language of 'anomaly' and the consequences to calculations of having identified anomalous results.

- A range of retrieval practices are used routinely across all subjects to help students learn more and remember more. In a Year 8 religious education lesson, students were able to recall the meaning of keywords such as 'incarnation', 'reincarnation' and 'samsara'. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, the 'Do now' activity focused on percentages and the multiplication of fractions, with the teacher live-checking and correcting answers. A Year 9 French lesson started with a recall quiz followed by the teacher giving immediate feedback on common errors so that students could discuss their mistakes and appreciate how they should be corrected.
- Teachers are explicit in developing oracy and literacy skills, not only through the development of disciplinary language but also by providing students with a range of opportunities for expression. Consequently, students can communicate with confidence and fluency. For example, students in Year 10 English could use expressions such as 'tyrannical regimes' and 'Jacobean influences' as part of their discourse. Through a think-pair-share activity in religious education, Year 8 students discussed utilitarian and absolutist perspectives on a 'runaway train' scenario.
- Teachers expertly deploy a range of strategies for assessing learning in lessons to enable timely and incisive feedback and inform adaptations. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, the teacher retaught a concept after students had shown four different responses to a question on their mini whiteboards. In Year 10 computing, cold call questioning was used effectively to gain feedback on the retrieval activity, with the teacher consistently allowing thinking time before seeking a response.
- Lessons are hallmarked by clear routines, high expectations and positive relationships and are consistently underpinned by the three Rushey values. Thus, a strong culture for learning exists across the school. There was no distinction in student behaviour and engagement between a Year 10 class taught by an experienced business studies teacher and a Year 11 mathematics class taught by an early career teacher (ECT).

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

... the school further enhanced its existing multifaceted approach to working with its hard-to-reach students and families to improve outcomes for this small cohort of persistent absentees.

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

- Leaders take a forensic approach to understanding the needs of disadvantaged students and those with SEND. This begins with a comprehensive approach to managing the transition into the school in Year 7, with students selected to attend a summer school, and includes a range of specific interventions from 'learning to learn' to targeted interventions.
- Staff use a range of assessments to tailor support strategies for individual students, taking care to ensure that they do not become overly dependent on supporting adults or isolated from their peers. In the school's new DSP, students attend tutor time and some mainstream lessons alongside the bespoke support of the special provision.
- The 'team around the year group', which includes the 'pupil premium champions', has developed a range of support strategies to help close the attainment gap for disadvantaged students. These are delivered precisely to avoid duplication and rigorously evaluated to inform the next steps.
- Teachers have specialist information about individual students through a range of sources, including seating plans and knowledgeable teaching assistants (TAs). As a result, they make appropriate adaptations while maintaining high expectations. For example, students with SEND in Year 8 religious education were seated in specific seats, ensuring that staff could discreetly provide support throughout a discussion on a moral dilemma.
- In a Year 7 mathematics lesson involving several students new to English, the teacher used a choral response to ensure everyone could use the correct vocabulary: a positive and a negative make a zero pair.
- In a different Year 7 mathematics lesson, the TA offered discreet physical support to a student so that he could participate and continue to take responsibility for his learning.
- In comparison with national cohorts, disadvantaged students and those with SEND at the school make strong progress and achieve well.

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

None emerged on this review.

5. Area of Excellence

The quality of education in history

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 ambitious history curriculum provides students with a coherent knowledge and understanding of key events, beliefs, ideas, and people in Britain's past and that of the wider world. The overarching theme of this curriculum is the exploration of 'Who are the British?' This theme is interleaved across Key Stage 3 and picked up in Key Stage 4 to promote a cohesive understanding of the diverse peoples and cultures that have shaped Britain and why the world is the way it is today. Careful consideration has been given to the curriculum design and sequencing to ensure it connects with and reflects the school's local context. So, for example, students are introduced to early migration to Britain in Year 7, which then runs through the subsequent years and concludes with the GCSE unit on migration in Year 11.

The history curriculum is delivered by a team of highly skilled educators who utilise an array of pedagogical techniques to ensure effective learning. Notable strengths include the proficient use of questioning and the quality of teacher exposition. The department has also played a crucial role in embedding successful strategies for literacy and oracy, consistently maintaining high standards throughout.

To ensure that the comprehensive Key Stage 4 content is explored in depth, teachers have developed bespoke booklets for each of the main GCSE topics. These resources reinforce core knowledge, allowing ample time for its application and supporting students in honing their skills in answering examination questions. When students were asked about their experience of GCSE history, one Year 11 student stated that 'the booklets are good, but it is the knowledge and enthusiasm of the teachers that is so amazing here.' Given the positive impact of introducing the curriculum booklets at GCSE, the team has now developed their use as part of their delivery model in Years 7 and 8.

In addition, the department has carefully designed their assessment model to balance the purpose of assessment with teacher workload, replacing traditional book and booklet marking with a streamlined approach which includes regular shorter assessments, three summative assessments per year, and frequent in-class checks on learning using hinge questions. Together, these enable teachers to appropriately and effectively adapt the learning to ensure students are secure in the required disciplinary knowledge.

The history team has also successfully implemented a structured and sequenced homework model to enhance students' retention of core knowledge. This model includes weekly tasks that use knowledge organisers, guided reading, research activities, and online knowledge quizzes. The latter are specifically designed to include strategies such as spaced retrieval and the interleaving of topics, which are proven to support long-term memory.

5.2 What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?

Key Stage 4 outcomes at grades 9-7 have been consistently well above the national average, with more than 30% of the mixed-ability cohort achieving the top grades in the last two academic years. Outcomes at grades 9-5 have also been consistently above the national average. In both 2023 and 2024, boys outperformed girls at 9-7, and the outcomes for SEND and disadvantaged students mirrored the high performance of the whole cohort.

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

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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 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



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report (<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit>)