Name of School:	Rushey Mead Academy
Headteacher/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:	07/02/2024
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	Leading
Date of last QA Review:	23/01/2023
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 agree 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 students and students with additional needs

Area of excellence   Accredited

Previously accredited valid areas of excellence   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

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

Rushey Mead is a well above average sized, 11 - 16 mixed secondary school. It is oversubscribed. The modern, purpose-built school buildings and grounds provide students with a pleasant environment next to the winding Rushey Mead waterway.

The school's location on the outskirts of the city of Leicester is of above average deprivation. However, the student deprivation base is close to average, with a proportion of disadvantaged students that is below the national average. The vast majority 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. A number of students join the school mid-year and want to stay. Consequently, the stability of students is well above average.

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.

The school sits within Leicester local authority. Rushey Mead is an academy converter and an original school of The Mead Educational Trust. It is home to the Leicester and Leicestershire Teaching School Hub, providing high quality professional development for over 200 schools. The school is also the lead school in the Leicestershire Secondary School Initial Teacher Training housed in a neighbouring building on the opposite side of the mead but within the same site. The school's approach is for everyone to work together to 'make a positive difference' to themselves, others and the world.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Leaders model their vision. They bubble with enthusiasm and energy as they share school life and interact with students in the corridors. They are remarkably knowledgeable about individual students in terms of need, provision and as a person. The answers to simple enquiries spill on to further impressive stories about provision and student outcomes. For example, outdoor table tennis tables revealed specialist coaching provision leading to championship level students. The peace garden led on to sponsorship by local charities providing space for student emotional regulation, lessons and performances, such as a powerful dance performance by a selectively mute student.

- Leaders achieve their aim that the Rushey 1-2-3 values of 'be kind, work hard and develop your whole self' permeate across all aspects of school life. One visiting reviewer was particularly impressed to observe how this works authentically as a lived reality in all aspects of practice that she saw and heard.

- Staff describe leaders as 'responsive, decisive and consistent' so that they feel supported in their professional development. Staff value the diverse range of professional learning opportunities, for example the carousels on mental health and checking for understanding.

- Curriculum leaders confirm that leaders' approach of giving subject autonomy within a tight whole school framework empowers them to use their expertise to create high quality curriculums. They value the quality assurance processes of subject explorations, showcases and learning walks based on subject best practice grids as a supportive mechanism to further shape and innovate their curriculum. As a result, staff work as a team with a common purpose agreeing, 'We are lucky to work together'.

- People want to stay in the school. Examples abound of students becoming parents or even teachers and how trainee or leaving teachers return when they can. Staff appreciate the career progression opportunities. One member of staff joined as an early career teacher, progressed from teacher mentor to a student premium champion and is now a curriculum leader.

- The broad curriculum within the classroom and the extensive extra-curricular activities support students to make decisions and feel confident at each different phase of their education and beyond school. As a result, character development and careers education and guidance are key strengths of the school.

- Leaders' response to last year's EBI about extra-curricular activities for all is extensive. Tutors now have a specified time to engage those students who may be reluctant or vulnerable to engage in extra-curricular provision. Tutors emphasise the importance for developing future skills as well as for completing their Rushey Passport. Leaders respond to student requests for clubs, such as introducing futsal. As one student confirmed, 'There's something for everyone here.' Leaders also invite external agencies to work within school as mentors to vulnerable students. During the review, one of these agencies, Leicester City in the Community, contributed to an exceptionally powerful assembly by young carer students from the school community. Leaders are confident that, by the end of Year 11, all students evidence the expected engagement in their Rushey Passport.

2.2 Leadership at all levels - Even better if…

…leaders built on their extensive partnership working by coordinating visits to see practice in other high performing schools beyond the MAT.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- At Key Stage 4, leaders fund small classes in order to maintain an offer leading to qualifications in the arts. The student entry and achievement rate for the English Baccalaureate is notable as being well above the national average.
- Subject leaders plan a high-quality curriculum. Rushey values and British values are carefully linked throughout all subjects. Teachers routinely start lessons with thought provoking recall activities, which students say help them remember what they need from previous lessons.
- The Rushey Principles for teaching are explicit in all lessons. For example, teachers use their knowledge of their students to demonstrate a range of strategies to check individual student understanding. Their ability to respond in the moment to student errors and misconceptions is impressive. For example, when some students drew incorrect graphs to represent a diode I-V relationship on their whiteboards, the teacher asked students with correct diagrams to explain their thinking until everyone was able to correct their graph.
- As part of the whole school literacy strategy, teachers routinely use strategies for vocabulary development. This includes spotlighting vocabulary in retrieval practice, emphasising key words in teaching materials, modelling how to use the words during the lesson and dual coding. Teachers link this vocabulary development to the oracy strategy by modelling the pronunciation of subject vocabulary and asking students to repeat. Students said they enjoy this 'choral chanting of key words'.
- All teachers are subject specialists.. They devise questions in the moment to help or stretch students as appropriate. Teachers enforce the culture of 'no opt-out' so students know to participate when asked. Students demonstrate their active listening when asked to build on each other's responses. The best teaching pushes students to improve their sentence structure.
- When asked, students give answers in lessons which demonstrate their understanding, share opinions and justify their thinking. In the best lessons, students ask questions and drive discussion and debate, such as when exploring democracy, dictatorship and communism. Similarly, when

answering questions by visiting reviewers, students demonstrated clear thinking, articulation and politeness.

- In the best lessons, teachers plan activities that challenge students to talk with each other. For example, students in a computing lesson actively discussed their thinking with partners when the teacher challenged them to think about where they had used enter codes in their programming and whether they had put them in the right place.

- Teachers plan so that students have detailed notes for activities such as recall, homework and revision. Students' presentation and thoughtful collation of handouts demonstrate that they take a pride in this work.

- Teachers ensure that all feedback is formative, for example they adapt their lessons as appropriate before returning any assessment feedback to students.

- A wide range of curriculum areas give attention to reading, such as the reading scholar programme in geography. In addition to a well-stocked library and each year group's weekly stimulating reading for pleasure curriculum in tutor time, staff motivate students to read in various ways such as through house competitions or gain points for their Rushey Passports.

- Leaders' expectations for high quality extends to all that happens in school, such as form time and assembly. Form tutors teach learning strategies such as memorisation techniques, mind dumps and note taking which teachers expect evidence of in student homework tasks. Following training, tutors run read aloud sessions in partnership with student reading ambassadors. The librarian selects class sets of high-quality texts but gives tutors and students the choice of which sets they want to read. Form time learning visits showed the same consistently high standards across form groups as in lessons.

- The high-quality provision leads to exceptional student results in national examinations. Last year, students' progress from their Key Stage 2 starting points was exceptional, achieving the top percentile nationally. The most recently published destination outcomes show that an above average number of students sustain their education.

3.2 Quality of provision and outcomes - Even better if…

…leaders continue to i) develop their reading to learn strategy to achieve the same high quality as their reading for pleasure and learning to read strategies and ii) build even further on their oracy strategy successes so that all students' group conversation skills achieved the same high standard as their individual question answering skills.

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

- Leaders achieve their aim of supporting every individual 'to be the best they can be.' For example, they give a high profile to the Rushey Passport graduation which enables all students to be successful, whatever their ability or background.

- Leaders create a culture so that 'no student who needs additional support is missed.' Their staffing structure of 'The Team around the Year' provides several layers of support for all students by including heads of year and other key roles, such as learning and behaviour mentors (LBMs), pupil premium champions, attendance officers and counsellors. These teams meet routinely, describing themselves as a family working together. Key students are spotlighted in one of these meetings when their teachers also join. For example, LBMs advise teaching staff on students' ability to keep up with elements of a lesson.

- Leaders monitor all students through the their 'trackers', individual student electronic dashboards of key indicators. When any student is identified as needing support, the team offers 'pastoral wrap around' services. As a result, students feel well supported, with one explaining, 'We know that there is always someone looking out for us.'

- Teachers use the electronic information provided about students, called advice cards, to adapt lessons and resources. Prior teaching for some students enables them to keep up with their peers, such as key vocabulary for The Tempest.

- The consistent lesson routines and calm learning environment enables the most vulnerable students to keep up with their peers by avoiding overload. This environment extends to all aspects of the school day. The level of respect during Year 10's corridor line-up address was such that it was silent enough to hear the Head of Year's voice along the whole corridor.

- In addition to the whole school literacy and oracy provision, the Language Development Team particularly supports such as EAL students who are new to English. Students appreciate how this helps them, with one student stating, 'I have learned how to speak English by using phonics and have a booklet on this that helps me to feel confident.' To supplement support in lessons, leaders provide a wide range of age-appropriate phonics or comprehension lessons with trained learning mentors before and after school. Such personalised pathways enable those students who are yet to read fluently to improve rapidly in standardised assessments.

- Leaders have addressed their EBI from the last review by identifying suitable alternative provisions (APs). The new role of a family support worker adds further support and capacity to the pastoral team, including welfare checks on vulnerable absent students, hardship fund applications for families and supporting the young carers. As an important result, some of these students have already improved their attendance and behaviour.
- Disadvantaged students and those with SEND make positive overall progress above the national average. Leaders continue to work to close in school gaps for some disadvantaged students. Students with high needs make exceptional progress due to the culture and opportunities. For example, one student exemplified 'The Rushey Way' by developing her fine motor skills with humour. She moved colleagues when she greeted them with, 'Have a nice day.'

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

None identified.

5. Area of Excellence

The science curriculum, teaching and learning and student outcomes.

Accredited

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

Leaders have identified science as one of their areas of excellence through their quality assurance processes, positive student feedback, the strong results that students achieve and the increasing number of students who wish to continue with science in their future studies. In addition, the department's reputation means that curriculum leaders already host visits from colleagues from other schools. As one visiting reviewer said, 'I have already booked the bus to bring my staff to visit too.'

The science co-curriculum leaders demonstrate expertise in the classroom which they use when modelling and feeding back to their science teaching colleagues.

Their expertise is evidenced from chairing and leading the City of Leicester education improvement partnership science group for several years and gaining the national professional qualification for subject leadership.

For visiting colleagues, leaders are experienced in offering bespoke days including meetings, resources and lesson visits according to interests. These can be selected from guidance and expertise in:

- The processes required to monitor and review a spiral science curriculum so that the substantive content order works best for students in terms of what should be taught when.
- How to liaise with other subject leaders and embed the disciplinary content order into the curriculum to best support student understanding and development in how to work scientifically. For example, where best to embed numeracy or graphing skills.
- How to develop a sense of awe and wonder about the material world in students by planning lessons around thought provoking and relevant 'big' questions.
- How to demonstrate to students the importance of studying science by linking their learning to everyday life, such as healthy lifestyles and future careers, such as metallurgy.
- Where to enrich the curriculum through links with external organisations, including the NHS, Caterpillar and extra-curricular clubs, such as physics club supported by the Ogden Trust.
- How to systematically collate student scientific misconceptions in order to incorporate teaching to avoid them into the curriculum plan.
- How to conduct frequent low stakes quality assurance of lessons to 'nudge' staff forwards so that they value the process as a positive aspect of their experience.
- Sharing assessments and assessment processes that help students to improve over time.
- Demonstrating how teachers and technicians work together to run 'slow practicals' that maximise student understanding and expertise.
- Demonstrating how to help teachers at the early stage of their career to teach with the confidence and to reflect on the expertise of more experienced teachers.
- Demonstrating how to help students' literacy and oracy in the use of scientific language.

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

- Students describe how science teachers help their learning. They particularly like the use of diagrams and simple memorisation techniques, such as linking the syllable 'in' found in both 'chang**in**g' and '**in**dependent variables' when describing impact.
- Students say they enjoy the small steps nature of their slow practicals and feel they enhance their understanding about why they are doing them, rather than simply following a set process. As one explained, 'It's not just like you're memorising the equation, it's actually understanding it.'
- Students gain confidence in recognising and speaking scientific terminology through teachers' use of choral response. For example, when studying the ear, students enjoyed chorally repeating parts such as pinna, lobule, scapha and tragus.
- When in science lessons, students show more intellectual curiosity by asking questions of the teacher when trying to apply what they had learned. For example, 'How does this happen?', 'Am I in the earth?' and 'Why can't the graph be like this?'
- When talking with students, they explain how science helps their lives by recalling the slides shown every lesson outlining a different science career and the big questions they had answered. For example, students knew they had to protect their own ears because they had understood how and 'why DJs go deaf'.
- Students gain understanding about future studies from advanced level taster lessons, close links with local universities and engaging with employers and science charities. Last year, the number of students choosing Level 3 BTEC Applied Science or one or more of the individual science A Levels jumped from around the national average of 20% to well above the national average at 34%.
- The overall progress that Year 11 students make in their national examinations is significantly above the national average and consistently in the top 5% in England and Wales. For the most recent national examinations, it was in the 100th percentile.

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

Names: Vanita Patel, Matthew Stopp

Job title: Science co-curriculum leader

Email addresses: vpatel@rushey-tmet.uk; mstopp@rushey-tmet.uk

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)