



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:	Leaders chose not to have estimates on this review.
Date of this Review:	04/02/2026
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	N/A
Date of last QA Review:	05/02/2025
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 N/A

Quality of provision and outcomes N/A

AND

Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with additional needs N/A

Area of excellence 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

Overall peer evaluation estimate Leaders chose not to have estimates on this review.

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 Academy is a much larger than average secondary school with just over 1800 students currently on roll. There is a thirteen-group intake in each year, with fourteen in Year 9. The academy is located in an area of high social deprivation in the city of Leicester. The school is extremely popular in the area, and each year is heavily over-subscribed. While nominally, under a quarter of students fall into the disadvantaged category, this does not reflect the high levels of need, with many families reluctant to apply for financial support. Over 90 percent of students are from ethnic minorities, with most from Indian Asian backgrounds. However, there is also a wide range of other ethnicities represented across the school. Unsurprisingly, the proportion of students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is well above the national average and Gujarati is the most commonly spoken. Over 54 other mother languages are spoken and increasing numbers of students join the school with little or no English. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is below the national figure.

The last two years has seen the introduction of the Designated Specialist Provision (DSP), Rushey Meadows, catering for a small number of students with communication and integration needs. More recently, an Internal Alternative Provision, Rushey Connect opened for students at risk of exclusion and those needing fixed term alternative curriculum pathways.

The academy has an over-arching aim for the students, stating, "We will provide for all our students' access to the best which has been thought, said, written and created in every field of human endeavour so that they are knowledgeable, critical, enriched and well poised to lead fulfilling lives."

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The principal at Rushey Mead is experienced, knowledgeable and passionate about providing the best possible education and experiences for every student. Her vision is shared by her extensive senior leadership team (SLT). Their collective strengths complement each other such that the SLT constitutes a formidable, cohesive unit that continues to drive the school to achieving greatness. This is borne out by the high-level academic outcomes the school achieves and the well-adjusted and well-prepared students who are ready to take their next steps.
- Rushey Mead has strict autonomy around the curriculum and systems because the Trust is very keen that all schools should retain their unique identity. There is a good deal of communication, collaboration and sharing of strong practice across all of the schools. In many ways, Rushey leads on different areas to the benefit of other settings. Subject-specific forums are

organised regularly throughout the year so that this level of support is available.

- Middle leaders are a highly skilled group, leading their respective curriculum areas, subjects and pastoral matters that results in high academic outcomes and well-supported students. They enjoy the autonomy they are given and have positive relationships with classroom teachers which contribute to a productive working environment.
- Leaders go to great lengths to ensure that all stakeholders see Rushey as a large school with a small school feel. Annual Meet the Tutor evenings give parents the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the pastoral and support mechanisms in the school. These are well attended, as are the separate traditional parents' evenings that are arranged for each year group. As the vice-principal stated, "We are very visible in the community," and there are many events organised that encourage parents to come into school. The family support workers are key to the success of this initiative.
- Leaders are proactive in streamlining systems and processes. This ensures that staff know that their wellbeing is always considered, and results in staff giving of their time willingly to provide a wide range of rich experiences as part of the extensive extra-curricular programme. Students have requested a number of new activities and staff are always give up their time if they can, to facilitate them. Participation in the programme is closely tracked so that students who have not taken up this offer can be encouraged to do so.
- Developmental Drop-Ins (DDIs) have taken the place of more formal learning walks. They are frequent and concentrate on an 'I really liked...' and 'Have you tried...?' comments, which staff have appreciated. The data that emerges from these sessions leads to specific continuing professional development (CPD) for example, a forthcoming training event is to focus on developing student independence. This process contributes successfully to the school's Professional Learning programme. As the principal commented, "We try to give as much time to subject and curriculum leaders as we can."

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

... leaders explored the possibility of applying for the World Class School Quality Mark award.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Teachers have extremely strong subject and pedagogical knowledge, which is a direct product of the quality CPD they receive. Responsive teaching is a given in the classroom where teachers habitually correct any mistakes and misconceptions in the moment, enabling students to complete their work successfully. The well embedded routines create a positive learning environment where students feel safe and confident to answer questions

- Modelling is a strength, and teachers maximise the use of visualisers to enhance learning. Notable examples were observed in a Year 11 physics session and a Year 10 English lesson where the teacher, by annotating and highlighting the text helped students to competently answer the questions on Macbeth.
- Scaffolding is adroitly used to support and facilitate learning. Liberal use of the 'think, pair share' strategy was seen in Year 11 history, Year 8 science and Year 7 drama lessons. This also enabled students to ask relevant questions of the teacher to extend their knowledge.
- The use of whiteboards to monitor engagement and check for understanding is an embedded strategy, notable examples occurring in Year 11 biology and Year 10 mathematics lessons. Furthermore, in Year 11 media, the teacher was not prepared to go on until they were satisfied that everyone understood.
- Relationships between staff and students could not be stronger, built on an atmosphere of mutual respect. In a Year 7 French lesson, the teacher could expertly gauge the progression of the lesson when students were learning modal verbs.
- High levels of engagement and positive attitudes to learning are commonplace in all lessons, thus there is no passivity and an abundance of interactive learning. Strong questioning enables teachers to embed understanding and much of the time, the challenge through teacher-led questioning stretches students' knowledge. In a Year 11 French class, targeted probing questions led to all students being fully engaged, resulting in a feeling of achievement when they got them right.
- High attaining students are given multiple opportunities to expand their knowledge and are challenged appropriately. Visitors are invited in to provide in-depth knowledge of what is available to students after they have left, and staff go beyond the syllabus in their subjects to stretch this group further. Membership of the brilliant Club gives students the opportunity to visit De Montfort University to deepen their knowledge and leaders take full advantage of commerce and industry to broaden students' horizons.
- Robust systems have been established so that each year group has a detailed homework plan to alleviate any stress so that students and parents are fully aware of what is likely to be set and when, and how long each piece should take. Students are then able to devise their own timetable, and they are also knowledgeable of the support and help systems in school. Student homework ambassadors are also available to help any of their peers that may be having difficulty to complete tasks and the impact of ex-students coming back to speak to current students about the need for completing homework has been very powerful.
- With such a multi-cultural school, as many authentic opportunities as possible are organised so that Fundamental British Values and the protected categories are regularly re-visited to keep them at the top of the agenda. Cultural Celebration Day enables all the different cultures and religions to be showcased and celebrated, which adds to students' cultural capital and global

knowledge. Five times in the year the Stop the Clock strategy closes down the curriculum for tutor time and Period 1 so that there is an age-appropriate session based on various aspects of personal development.

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

... staff continued to prioritise and further embed opportunities for students to become expert speakers.

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

- Staff are swift to identify barriers to learning for the disadvantaged students, particularly around language difficulties. Each year group has a Pupil Premium Champion who works with other leaders to provide a 'Team Around the Student' approach. This ensures that their needs are recognised and addressed.
- Disadvantaged students and those with SEND make excellent progress from their individual starting points because they are known and their respective needs are consistently met in class. They are made to feel valued and the principal commented that they are 'relentlessly supported.'
- Relationships are exceptional and the fact that routines and expectations are made clear to students with additional needs so that they know exactly what is expected of them. They appreciate the help they gain to achieve success, one student in a Year 10 PE lesson stating, "Sir helps me a lot. He lets me do what I can and supports me when I can't!"
- For students in the Rushey Meadows group, there is in-built flexibility to enable them to move into mainstream lessons when appropriate and this fluidity also allows them to come back into the DSP if necessary. All such judgements are based on what is best for the individual.
- There is no doubt that all students are intensely proud of their school, based on the high-quality teaching and learning they receive on a daily basis. However, the caring supportive culture in the school was summed up by two vulnerable students, one quoting, "If you are having a bad day, someone will always help you. Another added, "Being kind is at the centre of all we do."
- The Rushey Connect provision was established to work with a small group of students to provide an internal alternative provision so that they can improve their attendance, access the learning they need and join in with some mainstream lessons if and when this is appropriate. As the SENDCo noted, "We want this provision to be an intervention, not a destination!" The curriculum they follow provides as many real-life experiences as possible to help them to secure their futures after they leave school.
- Leaders have tried to engage more with parents whose children may be eligible for additional funding but may not be claiming it. Leaders have broken

down language barriers if that has been an issue and on induction, the means of this support is made known to parents of students joining the school to help them.

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

None emerged on this review.

5. Area of Excellence

Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)

Accredited

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

Modern Foreign Languages is a major strength of the school, led by two dynamic members of staff who portray unbelievable passion for this subject. Their boundless enthusiasm for the great work they do is astounding! Rather than follow a rigid textbook, the bespoke MFL curriculum and resources have been specifically designed by the two subject leaders and tailored to meet the needs of all learners. An innovative phonics system designed by them was shared with and used by schools nationally. This helps students develop greater understanding of the subject and directly aids reading and correct pronunciation. Lessons have a skills-based focus which play an integral part in achieving highly successful outcomes.

Unique active and passive knowledge organisers have also been developed in line with what is regarded as best practice in the teaching of MFL and these have been successfully adopted by other Trust schools. Staff do not rest on their laurels and continue to develop their expertise through Professional Learning days, faculty meetings, DDIs and using a shared curriculum. To ensure that they stay ahead of the game, staff routinely attend CPD, notably on changes to the MFL GCSE and one member of the faculty is a trained examiner in the oral examination. 37% of the faculty are native speakers, which contributes to a deeper cultural knowledge and on the pulse language nuance. Such has been the success of this faculty staff have received direct recognition of the school's success in languages by The Minister of State at the Department for Education. The examination outcomes demonstrate sustained excellence since 2011, when the Faculty of MFL was previously confirmed as an Area of Excellence. Feedback from teachers from other subjects shows that practice in the MFL classroom has been shared whole-school and has been

embedded into their daily practice. Gujarati is a valuable link to the local community, with a large majority of students being native speakers.

With MFL being mandatory for all students, there's a large faculty of 13 teachers at all levels of their career, meaning there is clear succession planning in place; recruitment and retention is not an issue. Despite proposals to discontinue the EBACC there are no plans to change Languages for All.

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

33.5% students achieved levels 7-9 in French and 68.8% in Gujarati while 78.9% students achieved levels 4-9 in French and 100% in Gujarati. These phenomenal figures are in line with legacy years, despite MFL being a non-optional subject, bucking the national trend in declining language entries. Unique, tried and tested pedagogy is embedded in the lessons of all 13 teachers resulting in high levels of participation by students. Lessons build resilience and confidence in an environment where students feel safe to 'have a go'. Students harness excellent communication and presentation skills in readiness for their next stage of life. The vast majority value languages and some choose to continue at A level once they leave Rushey. Such is their connection with the school and in particular these subjects, a number of ex-students have returned to carry out voluntary work in the faculty. The MFL curriculum exploits opportunities to broaden horizons through active teaching of cultural variations, trips to France and Rushey 3 additional activities.

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

Leanne Blackburn – Joint MFL leader – Lblackburn@rushey-TMET.uk

Tahara Sadiq – Joint MFL leader – Tsadiq@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 content reports from across the partnership of schools and trusts 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 partnership 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>)