



## QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

### REVIEW REPORT FOR CASTLE MEAD ACADEMY

<b>Name of School:</b>	Castle Mead Academy
<b>Principal:</b>	Tom Hague
<b>Hub:</b>	East Midlands South Hub
<b>School phase:</b>	Secondary
<b>MAT (if applicable):</b>	The Mead Education Trust

<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:</b>	Leading
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	16/06/2021
<b>Overall Estimate at last QA Review</b>	This is the school's first review.
<b>Date of last QA Review</b>	N/A
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	The school has not been inspected by Ofsted.
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	N/A



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#### Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising of host school leaders and visiting reviewers agree that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

<b>Leadership at all Levels</b>	Leading
<b>Quality of Provision</b>	Leading

**AND**

**Quality of Provision  
for disadvantaged pupils and  
pupils with additional needs**

<b>Area of Excellence</b>	Not submitted for this review.
<b>Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence</b>	N/A
<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate</b>	Leading

*Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed peer evaluation estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.*

## **1. Context and character of the school**

Castle Mead Academy is a brand new school serving a socially deprived community. It is situated in the centre of Leicester, with a city-wide catchment. The school currently has Years 7 and 8 and it will grow to an 11-16 school over time. In its short term of existence, it has become extremely popular and is thus heavily oversubscribed with more than double the applications for the places that are available. The school is housed in temporary accommodation and staff and scholars are very excited to be moving into the new school buildings at the start of the autumn term.

A third of scholars fall into the disadvantaged category, which is above the national figure. The school celebrates its diversity, with a much greater than average proportion of scholars coming from minority ethnic groups. White British is the predominant group, although there is a relatively equal division of other ethnicities. The proportion of scholars who have English as an additional language (EAL) is above the national average and there are 45 different languages spoken in the school. The proportion of scholars with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is broadly average.

### **2.1 Leadership at all Levels - What went well**

- The senior leadership team (SLT) has overcome the challenges of developing a new school along with the various lockdown periods and restrictions caused by the Covid pandemic. Leaders have admirably met these challenges with determination and enthusiasm, leading to a school that is thriving. The SLT is a passionate, talented group and it has been very successful in establishing a school that is fully serving the needs of its scholars.
- As the school grows, the principal views consistency as the key to continuing success. Staff are trained and coached to maintain routine expectations through the Warm/Strict approach. Over time, this became more personalised to each member of staff's needs and has resulted in the maximisation of learning time in class, with scholars displaying highly positive attitudes to learning.
- Leaders have been scrupulous regarding recruitment, particularly with large numbers of staff joining the school as capacity increases. The mindful appointment of new teachers indicates that the school's philosophy will continue and the very positive relationships that are embedded remain.
- The support the school has received from within the Trust has been invaluable. The school retains its unique character and autonomy. Having a close partnership with Rushey Mead Academy has been highly beneficial. However, leaders at Castle Mead enjoy the freedom to drive the school in their own direction and with their own distinctive values that are most applicable to their scholars.
- The long-term vision for the curriculum is to build scholars' cultural capital.

Leaders want to develop it alongside the preparation and readiness to continue each individual career pathway.

- Senior leaders have scheduled continuing professional development (CPD) for middle leaders to embrace their developing leadership skills as their departments grow. As one senior leader stated, 'we consider the What Now, What Next?' approach to curriculum, which ensures that the SLT is constantly looking forward. The established line management system provides the appropriate level of support and challenge for middle leaders. This has resulted in this group of staff becoming comfortable in leading and managing larger numbers of colleagues. For example, the 'Growing Great Leaders Series' programme has greatly assisted in developing aspiring leaders.
- The impact of the instructional coaching model in the school has led to more staff becoming 'coaching champions.' In year one, this was restricted mainly to SLT members, but other colleagues are now trained in readiness for the growth in numbers of staff. The SLT member who oversees this area has developed a successful 'coaching the coaches' model and improvements in pedagogy are already being observed.
- Within the limitations of the current school site, and the separation of scholars at various times during periods of lockdown, current scholars are looking forward to inducting new members of the school when they join. There is a flourishing scholar voice and leaders are exploring ways in which scholar leadership opportunities can be further developed.
- Governors (Academy Councillors) are very passionate, knowledgeable, and are aligned with the strategic direction of the school. They are acutely aware of the school's vision, its strengths, areas for further development and what is required to maintain the excellent progress that has been made since the school's inception.

## 2.2 Leadership at all Levels - Even better if...

...senior leaders considered how the professional growth programme can be adapted to support all leaders to evaluate the impact of their actions.

## 3.1 Quality of Provision - What went well

- Scholars benefit from high quality provision at Castle Mead; teaching and learning are clear strengths. The curriculum is adventurous and ambitious, even though circumstances carry restrictions. It is somewhat narrow in its scope because of the limitation of the site and resources, staffing and scholar numbers. Leaders have aspirational plans for expanding the curriculum in the future. For example, design and technology and computing are being added in the next academic year, others will follow as the school roll increases. The curriculum is focused on

scholars knowing more and remembering more and there are detailed expectations of where a scholar should be in terms of progress and attainment at the end of each year. This enables leaders to monitor accurately that the intent of the curriculum has been successfully executed through the implementation.

- Leaders have worked unstintingly to establish common routines that all scholars are expected to adhere to. These expectations are high and are met by all scholars in all classrooms. They are fully embedded, the impact being that high levels of engagement abound in all lessons, creating 'space' for teachers to teach and scholars to learn. In summary, scholars exhibit excellent attitudes to learning.
- Praise and positivity are commonplace, and this supports scholars to feel comfortable in class because they feel well supported. Conversely, scholars have no fear in taking risks in their learning and demonstrate boundless resilience. As one scholar stated, 'we can't always depend on the teacher – we have to persevere.'
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge which enables them to plan exciting and engaging lessons. This was acknowledged by a scholar who commented, 'every single thing we do is planned to the 'nth' degree – it is really impactful.' Teachers also model the learning intention effectively so that scholars can commence their learning effectively without misconceptions. For example, in a Year 7 art lesson focusing on grading and blending colours, the teacher modelled the learning by skilfully using the visualiser to show the class what to do.
- Teachers have established mutually warm and open relationships with scholars. They, in turn show complete respect for their teachers, which makes for a happy, harmonious learning environment in all classrooms. Teachers have exploited the relatively small number of scholars currently in the school. They have become acquainted rapidly so that teachers have a strong awareness of everyone's needs. So immersed in the life of the school are the scholars, they even use the same language as their teachers, one commenting, 'our whole curriculum is so cohesive,' while another added, 'we feel listened to by the SLT!'
- The culture for learning in the classroom is extremely positive. Teachers maximise the time, ensuring that transitions from one phase of the lesson to the next are seamless. Despite being housed in temporary accommodation, and with groups having to remain in their 'bubbles,' teachers make learning highly engaging to ensure that no learning time is lost. For example, in a Year 7 French lesson, a quick Youtube clip made learning more insightful.

### **3.2 Quality of Provision - Even better if...**

- ...leaders continued to develop consistency in crafting 'the big question' in lessons to connect to the overall learning narrative in all subjects.
- ...curriculum leaders considered opportunities for stretching scholars beyond the realms of their everyday practice in the form of purposeful 'stretch' questions.

#### **4.1 Quality of Provision for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - What went well**

- The provision for these groups of scholars at Castle Mead is exceptionally strong, overseen by an experienced assistant principal who adopted the role of SENDco when the school opened. She has now passed on the responsibility to a recently appointed member of staff. In addition, the school has a range of key workers and other staff with specialised expertise and knowledge that boost the capacity of this provision. To support pupils' learning, detailed 'pupil passports' have been constructed by the SENDco and her team. These are distributed to staff soon after these scholars join the school, which means that staff can cater for all scholars' individual needs immediately. At the end of each data cycle, the passport is reviewed and updated if necessary and information communicated to parents. For scholars new to English, a detailed profile is constructed on arrival, and this is disseminated to staff in a similar manner as pupil passports for those with SEND. This has enabled scholars with EAL to advance rapidly in reading, speech and comprehension.
- All CPD has had a positive impact. Scholars with additional needs have access to the full curriculum. The training staff have received around autism has had the most far-reaching impact. A positive example is of one scholar who is making strident progress because leaders believe in the saying that 'good teaching for pupils with ASD is good teaching for all.' Leaders' strategy for supporting these scholars enables them to learn successfully. The expansion of scholars' vocabulary is important to staff and is a continuing feature running through the curriculum. A recent professional learning session focusing on vocabulary highlighted the emphasis leaders place on this area. Developing these scholars' cultural capital is another important strand of the provision. For example, in art, staff highlight the context of the artist, not just the work he/she produced.
- Curriculum entitlement is a key feature of the school's philosophy. For example, in history, every disadvantaged scholar follows the same curriculum intent and sequence of learning but with a slightly different approach for some classes to help them develop their knowledge appropriately.

#### **4.2 Quality of Provision and Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional needs - Even better if...**

None emerged on this review.



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#### **5. Area of Excellence**

Not submitted for this review.

#### **6. What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?**

The leadership team would like to reflect on the content of the report.

**This review will support the school's continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities.**

**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 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.**