



## QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

### REVIEW REPORT FOR CASTLE MEAD ACADEMY

<b>Name of School:</b>	Castle Mead Academy
<b>Head of School:</b>	Chloe French
<b>Hub:</b>	East Midlands South Hub
<b>School phase:</b>	Secondary
<b>MAT (if applicable):</b>	The Mead Educational Trust

<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:</b>	The school chose not to have estimates
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	15/04/2024
<b>Overall Estimate at last QA Review</b>	Leading
<b>Date of last QA Review</b>	09/11/2022
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	Outstanding
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	24/10/2023



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#### 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 pupils and pupils with additional needs**

**Area of excellence** Reading - Accredited

**Previously accredited valid areas of excellence** Professional Growth (June 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**

Castle Mead Academy is an over-subscribed school which has a commitment to the highest level of pastoral care and academic achievement. It is located in the heart of historic Leicester. It is a free school which opened in 2019 on a temporary site. The new building opened in 2021 and it was full for the first time from September 2023.

Castle Mead is part of the 'The Mead Educational Trust'. The academy's culture is underpinned by four Key Drivers:

Everyone is capable of excellence  
We develop the whole self  
We make no excuses  
Feedback is a gift

39 percent of scholars are from a disadvantaged background which is higher than the national average. The proportion of scholars with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is above the national average. There are 31 scholars with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) with six more pending. A significant proportion of SEND scholars have social, emotional and mental health and/or autism as their primary need. An above average proportion of scholars speak English as an additional language (EAL). The largest group of scholars are of White British heritage, whilst the remainder come from a range of other groups.

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

- The head of school is an enthusiastic and inspiring leader. She is an excellent role model for adults and scholars alike. Senior leaders are an exceptionally strong team with a well-balanced range of skills. They are relentless in their resolve to secure the best possible outcomes for scholars. Leadership roles have been distributed with clear accountability at all levels.
- Leaders regularly update the impact of actions taken in the school improvement plan (SIP). Leaders seek to drive continuous improvement and to promote clear lines of accountability. Elements of each priority in the SIP are rated as 'red, amber, green' so that progress is clear. Refocusing takes place where areas require more attention.
- Subject leaders are supported to meet progress-based targets through curriculum conferences where discussion takes place about, for example, mock examinations and the revision diet for Year 11. Ambitious targets, linked

to the key performance indicators and focused on data, are set for all subjects and leaders are held to account for the attainment and progress of their scholars. Senior leaders continually focus on maximising the proportion of scholars gaining grades 4 and 5 in both English and mathematics.

- Mock examinations for the first cohort of Year 11 were encouraging and predictions for Progress 8 this year are well above the national average for 2023. The assistant principal (achievement) is meticulous in her approach.
- Overall, subject leadership is strong because leaders are articulate and highly capable of explaining the rationale behind their curriculum intent. There is a high level of consistency across departments. Line management is currently rightly focused on the current Year 11 scholars, the first to take GCSE examinations at Castle Mead.
- There has been a move away from appraisal and a new approach has been adopted. The 'my professional development conversation' (MPDC) has engaged staff well. They feel that they own the process and that their wellbeing has been well supported. Senior staff do everything they can to ensure that staff morale is high and workload is well considered.
- Leaders praise the trust for its collegiate approach. Support is readily available and leaders capitalise on the expertise within the trust to drive continuous improvement. All staff and scholars benefit from the ensuing shared endeavour and 'teamship'. The academy forums focus on the strategic direction of the trust and how it filters into individual schools. The central trust team add value to the school through sharing particular approaches, for example, to monitor the quality of provision.
- The school's 'culture of critique' approach to quality assurance promotes continuous improvement. Senior leaders work collaboratively together. Strengths and areas of development, alongside trends and patterns, are identified with subject leaders. These form the basis of the professional learning for the following term. Visits to other colleagues' classrooms are commonplace and feedback celebrates success; next step actions are given in an encouraging way, for example, 'You might want to try'.
- Instructional coaching is an integral part of staff development and is decoupled from any accountability measure. Leaders are clear that high quality coaching relies on first rate coaches so much has been invested in the development of coaches so that they can adapt to the person in front of them. The impact of the coaching on improving the quality of teaching is gathered through data generated by surveys, what is seen in classrooms and in scholars' books.

- Leaders at all levels are clear that the curriculum is 'never finished'. They appreciate the opportunity they have had to craft the curriculum year by year as the school grew in numbers. Scholars have a high degree of knowledge about their curriculum and understand the journey they are on.

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

None identified.

## **3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well**

- There is explicit teaching of 'character' and behaviour. The language and modelling shared by staff has promoted scholars' understanding of the 'no excuse' attitude. There is a focus on building belonging, on being the 'best version of yourself' and to 'speak like a scholar'. The enrichment programme contributes well to the development of scholars' character traits.
- Scholars come from very different backgrounds and the Castle Mead values are instilled on arrival in Year 7 so that scholars feel that they belong to the school community. The strong approach to classroom routines maximises learning time, and the vast majority of scholars understand the need for classroom routines and uphold them, a few are supported to do so.
- A Year 11 mathematics revision lesson demonstrated embedded classroom routines. Scholars completed a 'Do Now' activity as a retrieval exercise. The teacher carefully explained and modelled the answers so that scholars could recognise their mistakes and misconceptions. 'The Big Question' followed, focusing on 'How do we solve quadratics?'. 'Turn and talk' enabled high levels of collaborative discussion. Systems were clearly embedded.
- Questioning clearly promotes high levels of oracy. In Year 7 geography, scholars discussed the challenges posed by the Grand Renaissance Dam and its possible implications for Egypt and Sudan. 'Turn and talk' opportunities gave all scholars time to prepare answers to the teacher's questions. The teacher listened in to scholars' discussions and probed their initial comments further, saying, 'I've got a question for you'. Consequently, one scholar was able to expand significantly on their answer which contributed well to their ability to remember what had been taught.
- Formative assessment is seen in every lesson. The purposeful use of mini whiteboards is a focus and, in lessons, scholars were all able to answer

questions posed by their teachers who checked if any scholars were struggling. There were appropriate lengths of time allocated for independent practice. Curriculum driven cumulative summative assessment was key in gathering information about how well scholars were retaining and remembering what they had been taught. Standardisation and moderation processes were robust and ensured that teachers' assessments were accurate.

- The teaching of poetry in an English lesson supported scholars in Year 11 with their revision strategies. For example, annotation completed alongside the teacher helped them to identify on what they needed to concentrate their revision.
- Curriculums are carefully resourced and centrally planned resources reduce teachers' workload. However, all teachers plan lessons to the detail to ensure that teaching is highly responsive. Academic rigour and excellence feature highly in the school's aims. There is a wide extra-curricular offer and enrichment promotes the development of scholars' cultural capital.
- The school pays attention to ensuring that scholars make the appropriate decisions about their future lives. Career teams are highly strategic and identify particular scholars who need support. Employers have visited the school to help scholars with their interview techniques.

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

... all scholars were consistently challenged to think hard in all subjects, to match the best practice seen.

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

- The SENDCo is ably supported by a deputy headteacher and a lead teacher with solid knowledge of intervention. Two HLTAs, one of which is ELSA trained and another who delivers phonics and reading intervention, make for strong additions to the team. The team of key workers is allocated to year groups and assume a number of specific roles.
- Some scholars belong to the 'Building Belonging Groups', one in each year. The high quality of staff supporting these groups ensures appropriate and bespoke provision. The scholars placed in these groups are regularly reviewed and changed. Careful consideration is given so that they are able to

cope positively when returning to some lessons from which they have been temporarily absent.

- A Year 7 history lesson about Medieval England was planned well to engage the 'Building Belonging' group which contained scholars with a high level of additional needs. The culture of success was excellent and scholars demonstrated high levels of engagement. Consequently, they were able to retrieve information from prior learning before moving on to understand what happened following William the Conqueror's death.
- The SENDCo is aware that the progress of SEND scholars is not as rapid as for others. She has a clear plan in place to accelerate the progress of individuals on a case by case basis. Key workers check the data of scholars and follow up as necessary.
- Disadvantaged scholars enjoy the attention of the 'PP champions'. This is a well-considered role which ensures that identified scholars are tracked carefully to promote higher achievement. The gap between these scholars and their peers is closing because leaders have invested heavily in pinpointing their additional needs.
- Centralised passports are available to which staff can refer. Key strategies are indicated on the passports to support teachers' use of best approaches; for example, advice for profoundly deaf scholars. Staff pay strong attention to the passports and the SENDCo checks when she observes teaching. Professional learning sessions have been delivered to ensure that great teaching for SEND is great teaching for all.
- The SENDCo describes the work done with staff on cognitive load as being significant, and as a result, changes have been made to booklets. For example, in geography, more accessible material is now included which presents greater challenge.
- The SENDCo works to empower parents, and signposts them towards specific help beyond school. Parent workshops have been offered on sleep, hygiene and emotional-based school avoidance.

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

... there was less variability in rates of progress between different subjects for SEND scholars.

## **5. Area of Excellence**

### **Reading - 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 school has developed a whole school reading culture where scholars' time to read is maximised. There is a shared language to discuss and embrace reading which underpins scholars' ability to be successful learners and citizens. Through the three pillars of Reading for Pleasure, Reading to Learn and Learning to Read, scholars are supported to achieve excellence and combat barriers to success with a no excuses approach. Consistent approaches to reading ensure that success is the norm, reading is a habit and no scholar is left behind. No scholar is too shy to read aloud, avoids reading at all costs or fears reading. Of the subjects taught in school, reading is first among equals – the most singular in importance because all others rely on it. The strategy is research informed and has been designed in consideration of the most recent Ofsted reading report 2022. The strategy is supported through professional learning, responsive expert practice, curriculum leaders in department meetings and priority of coaches.

- Reading for Pleasure - texts are carefully selected and sequenced to allow scholars to both hold a mirror up to their own selves through the rich texts that they study, and to reflect upon their own thoughts, feelings and place within the world. Other texts also show scholars a window out into the world of wider human experiences, different customs, beliefs, as well as new and enriching knowledge which will only unlock more windows and doors for them in the future.
- Reading to Learn - all teachers at Castle Mead are teachers of reading. They are aware of the levels of reading proficiency of each scholar and use this information in planning access and scaffolding learning in their subjects. Subject specific reading is a key feature of the curriculum and departments plan to ensure reading opportunities are maximised within their curriculum design, whilst respecting their subject distinctiveness.
- Learning to Read – leaders analyse the Standard Age Score (SAS) for each scholar and recommendations are available for all staff. They are empowered to use data to support and stretch scholars in their classes.



- Additional/Bespoke Interventions – as part of the inclusion interventions for scholars with SEND, key workers regularly provide bespoke approaches involving pre-learning and /or over-learning vocabulary and key words.

The expertise around reading at Castle Mead is recognised and shared across the trust. Senior leaders from other secondaries have also visited and shadowed staff at the school to learn more about the reading strategy. Leaders are able to offer support with designing a research-informed professional learning programme for reading that reflects contextual needs; training on the principles and practice of 'Control the Game' and establishing a consistent approach to whole class reading; and, how to foster the culture of a 'Reading School'. Support can also be offered with implementation and consultation on a 'Reading for Pleasure' curriculum, text selection and supporting non-subject specialists

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

- 91% of scholars agree/strongly agree that Reading for Pleasure lessons help them with understanding reading.
- The success of 'Team Reads', in particular, is ongoing but tangible. For example, the average book borrowing daily numbers for Year 9 scholars doubled from 20 to 40 during the first two weeks of 'Team Reads' being promoted.
- The Cycle 3 Learning Walk 2022-23 confirmed consistency of approach and 96% of scholars recognised that teachers cold called scholars to read certain parts of texts.
- 94% of scholars agree/strongly agree that there are lots of opportunities to read in all subjects, not just English.
- SAS scores demonstrate the impact of Reading to Learn: we are adding value each year - mean for Year 10: 105.6, Year 9: 104.7, Year 8: 102.1, Year 7: 102.5 (national average is 100)
- Progress results from the academic year 2022-23 using GL assessments show that the following number of scholars made expected, higher than expected, or much higher than expected progress:
  - Year 7: 88%
  - Year 8: 81%
  - Year 9: 78%
  - Year 10: 68%

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

Who is the staff lead in this area?	
Name:	Adna Harris/Amy Turner
Title:	Assistant Principal/Assistant Principal SENDCO
Email address:	<a href="mailto:aharris@castle-tmet.uk">aharris@castle-tmet.uk</a> / <a href="mailto:aturner@castle-tmet.uk">aturner@castle-tmet.uk</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 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>)