



## QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

### REVIEW REPORT FOR LEIGH ACADEMY RAINHAM

<b>Name of School:</b>	Leigh Academy Rainham
<b>Headteacher/Principal:</b>	Alex Millward
<b>Hub:</b>	Medway Hub
<b>School phase:</b>	Secondary
<b>MAT (if applicable):</b>	Leigh Academies Trust

<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:</b>	Leading
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	01/03/2023
<b>Overall Estimate at last QA Review</b>	N/A
<b>Date of last QA Review</b>	N/A
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	N/A
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	N/A



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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** Leading

**Quality of provision and outcomes** Leading

**AND**

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

**Area of excellence** Behaviour, Attitudes and Character

**Previously accredited valid areas  
of excellence** N/A

**Overall peer evaluation estimate** Leading

***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**

Leigh Academy Rainham is a mixed comprehensive free school that opened in September 2021 and is part of the Leigh Academies Trust (LAT). The Academy is the first mixed comprehensive in the local area of Rainham, an area where students are educated in a selective school system. This has made Leigh Academy Rainham a popular choice for local families. The Academy is heavily oversubscribed with an excess of 600 applications for a PAN of 180.

The principal was appointed in 2020 prior to the Academy opening and fostered the vision and values for the Academy from the outset, while virtually recruiting and building the first teaching cohort during COVID. The Academy opened to just Year 7 and now caters for Years 7 and 8, continuing to grow year on year and will have a 6th form once the first Year 11 cohort complete their examinations in 2026.

The Academy serves two local authorities due to being on the border of Medway and Swale, but most students come from Medway primary schools. The proportion of White British students at Leigh Academy Rainham is higher than the national average and there is a slightly higher proportion of boys than girls. There are very small numbers of ethnic minority and EAL students at Leigh Academy Rainham, with over 95% of the students speaking English as their first language. The attendance of students is currently well above national average. The proportion of disadvantaged students is slightly below the national average, and SEND students make up 25% of the current cohort, with a smaller than national average number of students with an Education Health Care Plan.

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

- The school has a strong and dynamic senior leadership team, who continuously go beyond the expected to ensure that all students have access to a wide and rich set of learning experiences. To support the delivery of learning, middle leaders are provided with both the autonomy and support to ensure that they make a proven, discernible contribution to implementing, monitoring, and refining the curriculum. The impact of their work is shown in their development of the 'Dream, Believe and Achieve' values, which ensures that all aspects of school life reflect the strong vision that 'there is no ceiling to what a student can achieve regardless of their ability and personal circumstances'.
- Communication is a strength and results in staff, parents and students being clear about what is expected of them, leading to consistency, trust, and respect at all levels. Students are rightly proud to attend Leigh Academy Rainham and the positive difference that the school has made to their lives.

This was shown by a Year 7 student who proudly reported, 'I'm proud to be at Leigh Academy Rainham because it will provide the next steps in my career. I like it here because my learner values make me the best person I can possibly be. I like to show grit in my work and challenge myself in all lessons.'

- Leigh Academy Rainham's leadership regularly shares evidence-based learning with peers from across their trust and in other settings beyond their school. There is clear evidence that the sharing of Leigh Academy Rainham's digital strategy has supported other schools across the wider Medway community to develop, replicate and rollout plans for developing innovative approaches to computing.
- Leaders ensure that all staff benefit from focused, timely and highly effective professional development and can demonstrate the sustained impact of this. During the last 12 months continuing professional development (CPD), has been responsive to the needs of a new staff body. This has allowed leaders to successfully implement a broad and balanced curriculum underpinned by the principles of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme. A strength of the school's CPD model is its ability to meet individual staff's interests and ambitions. This has seen staff engaging in sessions with other schools within the Trust and provided opportunities for them to regularly share their curriculum overviews and plan opportunities for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary learning experiences for students.
- Shared accountability is a feature of the school's continuing success. The senior team regularly complete learning walks and book reviews to quality-assure provision. Findings from monitoring supports coaching conversations with staff and informs future CPD sessions.
- Leaders have developed a cohesive approach to the teaching of diversity across the school. The impact of this is evident within the school's Theme of the Fortnight (TOTF) programme, which provides students with opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of key themes linked to discrimination, equality, diversity, mental health, safety, and wellbeing. Leaders' robust strategies to develop vocabulary has supported this work by providing students with the means to clearly articulate their opinions.
- Staff and student well-being is taken very seriously, and the impact of new initiatives and policies are routinely discussed by the school leadership. This has resulted in several practical measures, such as collaborative planning sessions, which have reduced staff workload. The effective use 'Fredo Friday' days, where staff can nominate colleagues who have supported them throughout the week, has also contributed to the positive ethos within the school. The focus on student wellbeing, which is supported by a clear system of rewards and sanctions, has further supported the positive relationships between all members of the school community.

- Leigh Academy Rainham's governors have actively sought validation of leaders' work, and regularly complete visits which are linked to the school's strategic planning model. Through these they seek opportunities to gather evidence to test leaders' judgements on the impact of school development, specifically the quality of the curriculum, digital strategy, and parental engagement.

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

... leaders at all levels continued to review current systems and approaches as the school grows and new staff are recruited.

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

- Staff at Leigh Academy Rainham pursue a shared vision to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all students, which is embedded securely and consistently across the school. The impact of this vision is evident in well-presented books and displays demonstrating coherently planned and well sequenced learning across a range of curriculum areas. The work given to students, over time and across the school, consistently matches the aims of the curriculum. It is coherently planned and sequenced towards building sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning.
- Positive attitudes in all lessons demonstrate students' engagement in their learning, as do their comments which show their deep level of learning, both inside and outdoor of school. Students are proactive in making tangible contributions to the life of the school and the wider community. This was demonstrated by a Year 8 student's comment that, 'we should show people photographs of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch so that they understand the danger of dumping plastic in the oceans.' The impact of the LEIGH Learner attributes, which provide a framework for students to develop as reflective and resilient learners, was also described by a Year 7 student, who in a PSHE lesson commented, 'relationships education is really important at our school. It helps us to understand our friendships.'
- Leaders have successfully implemented a strategy for reading which encourages students to interact with a variety of texts through the curriculum. This has included regular library sessions and the development of skills for reading comprehension within tutor time. The positive impact of this strategy was articulated by a Year 8 student who stated, 'I enjoy having the time to discover new authors. Having a focus in tutor time allows you to enjoy your

reading.' The school's reading strategy has also supported the development of students' curiosity across the broader curriculum and allowed them to make significant progress over time.

- Teacher's strong subject knowledge, which is developed through well targeted professional development, allows them to provide precise feedback to further accelerate progress. Students value feedback which encourages them to reflect on strategies to improve their learning to build sufficient knowledge and skills to support their future learning. For example, a Year 7 student stated, 'when I find topics difficult in maths, my teacher always gives me feedback to help me understand my next steps.'
- The Leigh Academy Rainham curriculum provides aspirational learning opportunities to prepare students for the next stages of their lives. The teaching of careers is mapped onto both the academic and pastoral programme and is routinely supported by external speakers who encourage students to consider choices that they will make in their future. During the last academic year students were spoken to by the Saudi Arabian ambassador, the drug detection unit, and members of Queen's College, Cambridge. In addition, students proficient use of new technology provides key information to ensure that they can confidently access prior knowledge to develop their understanding of key issues.
- High levels of attendance and limited fixed term exclusions provides clear evidence of the positive learning culture, which is supported by all staff at the school. Each student is allocated a tutor who runs a programme of social and cultural activities and provides personal mentoring. Examples of topical themes covered during tutor time include LGBTQ+, democracy and finance. These sessions provide regular opportunities for collective reflection and a stimulus for important cultural, social, and curricular topics. This focus on personal development ensures that all students behave with consistently high levels of respect for others. This focus was demonstrated by a year group leader who, when talking to students who were using laptops, shared, 'remember when you have finished setting up your device, fold your arms to show me that you are ready to learn and give high quality expectations.'

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

- ... staff continued to develop effective questioning techniques to enhance active engagement and level of challenge for individuals to gain confidence in articulating their learning.

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

- The school leadership team articulates a clear vision that ‘all of our children will be successful, regardless of their individual needs, and have access to the same opportunities as our other students.’ This shared belief encourages all staff, parents, and students to work closely together to ensure that those with additional needs are consistently provided with high quality personalised learning opportunities which meet their specific needs. It also ensures that these students are provided with a range of enrichment opportunities to reinforce their learning.
- Teachers are aware of the importance of their role in addressing learning gaps for students with additional needs. They are supported by enthusiastic leaders who ensure that they have the resources to identify students’ specific learning barriers and identify key objectives to address these. Teachers receive regular monitoring from the SEN team which provides immediate feedback. CPD needs are identified by this monitoring and addressed through regular training sessions, which has included support on developing inclusive learning environments to meet a range of additional needs. All staff also have access to a SEND ‘Teacher Toolkit’ in the school’s virtual staff room, which provides a wide range of resources to support those students with additional needs. The impact of this support ensures that all SEND students have been successfully integrated into mainstream lessons throughout the school.
- Effective SEN provision is provided for those students with the highest level of need through a range of initiatives including regular friendship groups and counselling support, which provide strategies to deal with anxiety, and Brandy the delightful therapy dog. These successful initiatives bring together a wide range of expertise from within the school to support vulnerable learners by equipping them with the skills needed to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.
- The individual needs of disadvantaged students are known, and support is put into in place for all staff to identify and share barriers to learning. High quality teaching and learning, which focuses on disciplinary literacy and is supported by the school’s robust reading programme, is a clear focus for the school. The prioritisation of vocabulary accusation supports them achieving the best possible outcomes from their starting points. An example of the impact of the school’s high expectation in this area was shown by a Year 7 pupil who



confidently explained, 'your body will grow faster than at any time in your life, except when you are an infant.'

- There is a clear expectation in the school that all disadvantaged students, deepen their full engagement in the school's broader curriculum and receive additional support, as appropriate, for mathematics, handwriting and reading. The success of these students is celebrated by all, whether it is demonstrated by their academic progress or improved motivation and confidence.
- The school's effective range of partnerships with external providers ensure that vulnerable students have a smooth and purposeful transition into the next stage of their careers. All students regularly attend trips, with 100% of disadvantaged students taking part in three educational visits last year. Frequent exposure to opportunities both within the wider community, and a range of visitors to school, inspire these students to explore a wide range of career pathways in later life.
- Leaders have developed positive relationships with parents by helping them to overcome barriers to learning for their children. Examples of support include financial support for uniforms, equipment, educational visits, and ingredients for food technology. This leads to a range of positive comments from parents such as, 'I think the school has a brilliant way of connecting with the students. My daughter is autistic and very shy, and she's really come out her shell since being at Leigh academy. She comes home every day so excited to tell me about everything she has learnt.'

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

... staff continued to develop adaptive teaching strategies to ensure needs of the more vulnerable individuals are consistently met.

## **5. Area of Excellence**

Behaviour, Attitudes and Character.

### **Accredited**

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





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At Leigh Academy Rainham behaviour is considered part of the taught curriculum, interwoven with personal development of students' character. Leaders' focus on developing the 'LEIGH' learner attributes of Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Inquisitiveness, Grit, and Humility underpins all aspects of the school's curriculum.

Leaders' application of consistent, prescribed systems and routines ensure that from the moment students arrive at the Academy they are being taught how to model exceptional, highly respectful behaviours. This creates well-mannered students who are engaged in every aspect of their learning.

Staff take all opportunities, with every interaction, to model to students what positive behaviours look like. When students make poor choices, it is always seen as an opportunity to further educate them and unpick what further learning is needed to avoid such repeated behaviours.

The school's strong reward culture, which reinforces exceptional attitudes to learning and positive behaviours includes a wide variety of initiatives such as 'Proud Fridays', where students can present work or personal achievements to the principal and receive recognition for these.

A range of opportunities are also available for students to develop their character and contribute positively to the local community. These include playing a proactive role in charity events and acting as ambassadors for the academy in local primary schools.

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

Attitudes to learning at Leigh Academy Rainham are positive and positive behaviour is the norm both within and outside of formal lessons. In a recent survey 96% of parents believed that students were safe and well behaved at school. 96% of students also confirmed that they were happy.

In 2021-22 98% of students took part in the school's co-curricular offer and engaged in a range of cultural experiences including international celebrations for Chinese New Year, eco competitions and global cooking clubs.



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Leaders have hosted primary headteachers from feeder schools to showcase expectations and strategies for promoting positive behaviours amongst students. Feedback from these visits has been positive and they have supported transition into Year 7. Leaders have also arranged for visitors from other secondary schools within their Trust to visit and observe their practice in this area.

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

Alex Millward

Principal

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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 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.



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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>)



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