



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR KESTREL MEAD PRIMARY ACADEMY

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| Name of School: | Kestrel Mead Primary Academy |
| Headteacher/Principal: | Zoe Simpson |
| Hub: | East Midlands South Hub |
| School phase: | Primary |
| MAT (if applicable): | The Mead Educational Trust |

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| Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review: | The school has opted not to have estimates this year. |
| Date of this Review: | 08/02/2023 |
| Overall Estimate at last QA Review | Leading |
| Date of last QA Review | 17/06/2022 |
| Grade at last Ofsted inspection: | Good |
| Date of last Ofsted inspection: | 15/03/2017 (For the predecessor school, prior to academy conversion.) |



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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:

School leaders chose not to have peer evaluation estimates for this review.

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 Accredited

Previously accredited valid areas of excellence Year 1 Continuous Provision

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

Kestrel Mead Primary Academy is much larger than an average-sized school, with four-form entry throughout and over 800 pupils on roll, including a small nursery. It is situated in the Hamilton area of north-east Leicester, which has a high proportion of social housing and private rental properties. The school has a split site, with the infant and junior departments located approximately 1.5 miles apart. The school experiences high levels of mobility, mainly due to many in-year admissions and relocations out of the area.

The school serves an area with rich levels of diversity. Almost one third of pupils are of Indian heritage which is the predominant nationality. High levels of pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL), with 46 different languages spoken in total. The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is higher than average, and the school also has its own designated specialist provision (DSP) for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder.

The principal was appointed in 2017, and there have been many changes to the staff and leadership teams since then. The school converted to academy status with The Mead Educational Trust in September 2019.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The well led, highly committed and proactive senior leadership team (SLT) members speak with confidence and pride about providing the best possible education and opportunities for all pupils, which is reflected in the school's motto to 'Be the best you can be'. This is intertwined with the core values of being resilient, whilst showing respect, compassion and curiosity, all of which pupils respond to effectively.
- School development planning is detailed and linked closely to school and trust priorities. All staff members are well-informed about ongoing progress with the priorities, via 'Take Stock and Celebrate' bulletins, staff briefings, principal reports, and the cycle of SLT meetings and phase meetings.
- Leaders are proud of the effective use of data which creates ambitious targets for all pupils to make accelerated progress. There is a strong desire that the cohort of pupils will not feel the long-term effects of the pandemic on their academic outcomes.
- Leaders have established a thorough 'probing practice' approach to monitoring, with regular activities for curriculum leads, deep dives and action planning scrutiny. As a result of these clear expectations, leaders know their school very

well and staff know what is needed to continue to sustain rapid and robust improvements.

- The collaborative staff team values the broad range of well-planned and focused continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities offered, which leaders describe as being 'the DNA of the school'. All staff benefit from professional learning, including teaching assistants being invited and able to claim for their time if outside of school hours. A triad process is undertaken to continually improve teaching and learning, with senior leaders facilitating teacher development, with expertise gathered across all key stages. Furthermore, a senior leader will offer support and insight during every year group's planning, preparation and assessment time. As a result, the subject knowledge of teachers and other adults is very strong. Notably, almost all senior and middle leaders have been internally appointed to more senior posts.
- Relationships between pupils, and between adults and pupils, are warm and productive. Wellbeing is clearly prioritised for both staff and pupils, and pupils' attitudes to their learning are excellent. This leads to a very positive learning culture.
- Leaders work hard to enhance links within the community and across different cultures, enhancing learning and showing reciprocity whilst respecting each other's faiths and beliefs. Celebrations for Diwali, Christmas, Eid, and other key events, are very popular with families and local neighbours from all faiths or none.

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

... leaders ensured that the good practice and implementation of instructional teaching evident in some classes is consistently embedded across the school.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Leaders and teachers have worked hard to embed their unique 'sticky' curriculum to best meet the needs and ambitions of pupils. Moral questions allow opportunities to showcase the carefully planned acquired knowledge and skills. The reflective nature of leaders ensures that the curriculum stays relevant, and the 'hidden curriculum' is addressed. Notably, teachers are actively encouraged to teach less, but in greater depth. Progression documents help to ensure the curriculum is broad, balanced, and sequential, with opportunities to revisit and consolidate learning being regularly incorporated.
- Each big question is studied over a five-week period, alongside the core subjects, which culminates in pupils completing their memorable learning journals during the sixth week. These journals demonstrate evidence of each pupil's learning and progress over time, including quick response (QR) codes to highlight IT links. Pre-

and post- assessments are also built into each topic. In addition to working walls for English and mathematics, each classroom has a large active display focusing on the big question, with work and notes added over the weeks. Importantly, the board related to the previous question becomes a polished memorable learning board display, which helps pupils link their learning and consolidate prior knowledge.

- Pupils benefit from spacious and well-resourced learning environments across both sites. Although quite different buildings, a consistent ethos permeates both the infant and junior sites, which leads to a very productive climate for learning. A lovely feature of each respective communal area is the artwork depicting the words of the 'All are welcome' book painted along the corridors. Transition into school, between key stages and onto secondaries has been externally validated as a key strength.
- The school's focus on pedagogy and teacher development ensures lessons consistently demonstrate high expectations and include insightful questioning to develop pupils' understanding. For example, in Years 2, 3 and 5 writing lessons, pupils benefited from the class teachers' skilful modelling of the 'I do, we do, you do' and 'think, pair, share' approaches. Pupils showed excellent understanding of text devices and punctuation, rising to the Mr Stretch challenges.
- In Year 6 mathematics lessons, a consistent approach to the modelling and teaching of explicit, technical vocabulary was seen, which enabled pupils to make excellent progress.
- The extensive Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) area is organised efficiently, with a range of purposeful learning opportunities. The children, including those disadvantaged or in the early stages of learning English, showed independence and curiosity in the continuous provision. Children were actively engaged in carefully planned, language-rich activities, enabling them to make rapid progress.
- Early reading and phonics are taught in whole-class groups through a systematic programme. Teachers and other adults demonstrate secure knowledge and skills, with accurate use of vocabulary. Consequently, phonics outcomes are predicted to improve significantly this year.
- The school has developed a very positive reading culture where a love of reading is encouraged. Reading emanates through every aspect of the school even as far as photographs of pupils with books on their lockers. The high priority given to developing confident readers links effectively with the book-led learning approach.
- Pupils typically enter the school at low starting points. However, achievement outcomes by the end of Key Stage 2 are similar to national averages, at expected and higher levels, which indicates the strong progress made. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their education.

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

- ... teachers maximised opportunities for challenge to ensure that all pupils reach their ambitious targets.

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

- The responsibility for disadvantaged pupils and those facing barriers to their learning are prioritised by all senior leaders. The leadership of SEND provision is strategically shared, allowing a responsive and supportive approach. The school utilises specialists within the team to provide a commendable offer.
- The team of child-centred teaching assistants work specifically with SEND, disadvantaged and EAL pupils in classes. All staff work collaboratively with a clear commitment to providing an inclusive culture which ensures the most vulnerable pupils achieve to the best of their abilities, both pastorally and academically.
- The strong personal development curriculum is further enhanced by specific work completed by the pastoral team that has forged strong links with many external agencies. These include external specialists in all areas of SEND, distinct areas of safeguarding and targeted therapeutic work. All staff benefit from the support and advice given.
- The DSP, a locally identified beacon of good practice, is staffed by a skilled team that supports and challenges pupils very effectively. The carefully planned curriculum, designed in collaboration with a local special school, is an enabler for all. Careful consideration is given for DSP pupils to access the mainstream provision, similarly the strengths of the DSP are beginning to disseminate across the mainstream classes.
- Leaders are passionate about providing the best possible learning opportunities for SEND, EAL and disadvantaged pupils. The curriculum is constantly adapted to target the most vulnerable pupils, with a good balance between quality first teaching and purposeful interventions. Pupil passports track small steps of progress carefully, with provision mapping reviewed regularly to ensure these pupils' needs are best met. As a result, gaps in learning are reducing and case study evidence indicates that vulnerable pupils are mostly making pleasing progress from their individual starting points.
- The behaviour and attitudes of pupils, including the most vulnerable, are very positive. This is due to the high expectations and consistent approaches evident across the school. All pupils are happy to play their part in the Kestrel Mead ethos.
- Leaders show a relentless drive to raising the profile of good attendance. Absence and persistent absenteeism are tracked closely, with home visits undertaken whenever necessary. Rewards and prizes are awarded for good or improving attendance, for individuals and classes, together with other initiatives such as providing bagels on the playground at the start of the day. As a result, there are promising signs of improvement to attendance levels.

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

- ... levels of attendance were further improved, particularly for disadvantaged and SEND pupils.
- ... the progress of disadvantaged pupils improved as a result of the academically-focused pupil premium strategy.

5. Area of Excellence

A model for a bespoke book-led curriculum that develops compassionate global citizens.

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 staff team has mapped out its reading and writing cycles to build on prior knowledge whilst working towards high level academic outcomes, together with a clear focus on linking with pupils' personal development and wider citizenship. The team members have broken down the National Curriculum into knowledge and skills, which they have used as a basis to bring their bespoke curriculum and long-term plans to life. The team has explored different teaching strategies, together with meaningful ways to assess reading and writing, with a consistent approach taken across the age range. Whole class reading sessions consistently link to a class novel or non-fiction text, with opportunities provided for reading fluency and oracy activities, using expression and comprehension. The school libraries and class book areas are stocked with high quality texts which provide a wide and challenging reading diet for pupils. Most notably, these texts reflect the wide diversity and cultural differences found within the school and local community, together with themes which explore challenging situations globally.

The staff team network widely with other primary schools across their academy trust, with many opportunities for writing moderation and journey to excellence reviews. They explore new teaching strategies and ways of assessing reading and writing, with the promotion of citizenship entwined throughout. This has enabled the English leader and other leaders to create the Kestrel Mead approach, which they are now keen to share with other schools. Leaders can offer guidance to colleagues in designing their own bespoke book-led curriculum, with suggestions for CPD activities and ways to support their teaching teams using the continuous, collaborative model and the writing cycle strategy document. They will advise colleagues on choosing quality texts that meet the visions and aims of their respective schools. Guidance could also potentially include

suggestions for planning and teaching effective whole class reading sessions and leading a deep dive, to identify areas of strengths and next steps.

Book-led learning is well-established and sustainable over time, with each year group having an expert practitioner alongside the leaders who have developed the programme.

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

It is evident that exposure to a range of high-quality texts through the book-led curriculum is having a very positive impact. In 2022, greater depth attainment at Key Stage 1 was identified as being significantly above national standards, after being moderated by the local authority. A similar picture was apparent at Key Stage 2.

The work in pupils' English books shows a clear journey of learning that leads to a final writing outcome. Books evidence the progression of learning through each academic year and across the age range. Pupils are able to use their books to talk about what they have learnt, to share what they are proud of, and to identify their own next steps. Furthermore, pupils can talk confidently and knowledgably about the personal development themes explored, such as homelessness, the embracing of different cultures, war, or the varied experiences of refugees. This then provides the opportunity for these challenging topics to be interwoven into the wider curriculum to raise awareness and to build on the pupils' wealth of global knowledge. Adults and pupils talk of the real 'buzz' evident around the school, the changing mindsets and the love of reading engendered.

It is notable that a local secondary academy principal recently reported, 'We can tell which students are from Kestrel. They have a voice and are happy in their own skins'.

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

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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.

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>)