



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR THURNBY MEAD PRIMARY ACADEMY

Name of School:	Thurnby Mead Academy
Headteacher/Principal:	Michelle Woodhouse
Hub:	East Midlands South Hub
School phase:	Primary
MAT (if applicable):	The Mead Educational Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	The school has chosen not to have estimates for this review.
Date of this Review:	12/03/2025
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	Not applicable (N/A)
Date of last QA Review:	06/03/2024
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	14/05/2019

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 pupils with additional needs

Area of excellence N/A

Previously accredited valid areas of excellence N/A

Overall peer evaluation estimate N/A

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

Thurnby Mead Primary Academy is a one-form entry primary school and nursery. The school is a member of the Mead Educational Trust, having converted to academy status in 2016. The principal has been in post for four years.

The school has a 20-place designated specialist provision (DSP) for pupils with speech, language and communication additional needs, including pupils with a hearing impairment.

The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average. Local statistical evidence suggests that a greater proportion of pupils could qualify for pupil premium funding. Many families are just over financial thresholds or new to the country and ineligible to apply for additional funding. The school has a diverse population and has high levels of English spoken as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is higher than national averages, partly due to the DSP.

The aspirational ethos and strong pastoral care of pupils and staff has built a positive and nurturing environment. The school's inclusive approach to learning ensures that all pupils both achieve and thrive. This is expressed in the collective vision of 'believe, achieve, celebrate'.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The inspirational principal leads the school with passion and enthusiasm and is ably supported by her proactive leadership team. Together with the staff they have built an ambitious and caring school which is valued by pupils, staff and parents. Change is thoughtfully considered, as one leader noted, 'we are forward actioning'.
- Leaders facilitate a broad range of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for staff, including national professional qualifications. Staff attend Trust collaborative subject forums and specific networks, for example an Early Years network. This has impacted the quality and rigour of the curriculum, such as teaching assistants' weekly phonic training to enhance understanding and delivery. The development of bespoke coaching activities provides opportunities for staff to reflect, discuss and improve their teaching.
- The capable leaders of mathematics and English have ensured that staff access clear planning, progression documents, resources and CPD.

Consequently, all pupils make strong progress. By Year 6, pupils achieve above national averages. In English, regular pupil progress and monitoring meetings have resulted in timely changes to fill gaps in learning. For example, the increased number of interleaving opportunities to recap inference and retrieval skills. In mathematics, provision is well matched to support pupils as evidenced in pupils' books.

- The curriculum is enhanced by a programme of explicitly chosen educational visits and activities which strengthen prior knowledge and motivate pupils. Break and lunch time provision is exceptional. All ages of pupils access a range of play opportunities including a sandpit, a stage with musical instruments, dressing up options and construction resources. Following a World War 2 history topic, a group of Year 5 pupils made a tank from the resources that involved collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving. One teacher noted about the older pupils, 'it allows them to be playful'.
- Leaders have worked to ensure greater representation of the diverse school community. This has helped families to have a greater sense of being part of the school. The development of regular cultural celebration assemblies has supported the sharing of culture and strengthened understanding. One example is an after-school Diwali celebration of music, dance and food. One leader said, 'these events provide 'windows and mirrors' ensuring pupils are represented for own identity and also see the wider world and understand and respect difference'.
- The school environment is welcoming and thoughtfully developed both inside and out. Displays in classrooms enable pupils to refer to prior learning, check and collect key subject information and build vocabulary banks. For example the quad box grid supports writers in capturing the purpose of writing, grammar and relevant vocabulary. Learning is celebrated through informative displays across the school which are linked via QR codes to videos that capture pupils' explanations of their learning.

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

... leaders created a leadership handbook to capture current practice and to support future development.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- The school is a calm and purposeful learning environment. The recent review of the behaviour policy clarified key agreements and has positively impacted learning and attitudes. Pupils enjoy coming to school and speak enthusiastically of the opportunities they have at school. In lessons, pupils are engaged and enthusiastic with effective habits of collaborative working. One pupil said, 'I like how there's different problems to solve and different ways to solve them'.

- The Early Years Foundation Stage is a strength of the school. The passionate Early Years leader has ensured that provision is focused and built around the needs of the children. In Nursery the prioritisation of the prime areas ensures that children are ready for Reception. Careful planning across Nursery and Reception ensures that children have chances to revisit skills and knowledge. For example in Nursery, children plant sunflowers and in Reception they plant grass heads.
- The school has been strategic in identifying and focusing on five key pedagogical strategies. These are intrinsic to learning across the school and engage pupils in their learning. This includes strategies such as 'signal, pause, insist' and 'think, pair, share'. This keeps expectations for all learners high. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson a child answered a question correctly, but the teacher used the 'say it again better' strategy to insist on the correct terminology of the 'ones column'.
- The school promotes the development of pupils' oracy, which includes using the work of Voice 21. The focus on vocabulary and use of sentence stems has ensured that pupils are supported to talk clearly and identify appropriate words, thereby strengthening their knowledge and understanding within different subjects. For example teachers use the app 'Chatter Pick' which encourages pupils to create a character and record themselves sharing key knowledge. This allows them to orally rehearse their sentences before writing.
- Routines are well established, and pupils move smoothly between different lesson segments. This results in well-paced and focused lessons. For example in a Year 5 writing lesson, the teacher prepared speech bubbles and modelled the writing of dialogue. She drew attention to the variety of synonyms for the word 'said' and encouraged pupils to be more adventurous in their choices.
- Thoughtful curriculum development has ensured that there is clear progression and coherence in the sequencing of learning. Staff appreciate the video subject CPD to use prior to teaching and to support planning. Pupils' individual journals show a clear process of learning that develops understanding and skills whilst also allowing pupils to record their perceptions and ideas.
- The school has a clear approach to the teaching of phonics and staff show fidelity to the chosen scheme. They have embraced key strategies and successfully use specific mantras and lesson structures. Teachers use agreed processes to manage the different segments of the lesson. For example, in a Year 1 phonic lesson, teachers used clear pocket wallets and A frames to support lesson focus. Consequently, the lessons moved at pace and pupils were engaged. Staff in the DSP modelled sounds clearly and picked up on misconceptions quickly. In phonic lessons, pupils make strong progress and staff are confident in their practice.
- All pupils benefit from highly supportive pastoral provision. Consequently they enjoy coming to school as evidenced by the significant improvement in attendance.

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

... leaders secured consistent language and practice relating to key school pedagogical strategies.

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

- Leaders ensure that inclusion is at the heart of all decisions relating to provisions, curriculum and pedagogies. The capable SENDCO leader has secured a clear graduated approach. All staff appreciate the importance of ensuring that adaptations support pupils to be successful. Pupil progress meetings facilitate tailored, personalised support.
- Interventions are thoughtfully identified through pupil progress meetings which include the re-naming of the lowest 20% as the 'first twenty percent'. Interventions include rapid catch up for phonics and a 'keep up to move on' programme for pupils in Year 1. The spelling tutor online platform has resulted in all 14 pupils making significant progress.
- A wide range of professional development opportunities have been made available. All staff have received training within specific areas, for example in learning communication and interaction for pupils in the DSP but also as useful strategies for all pupils. Individual staff have accessed training that has brought wider expertise into school. For example two teaching assistants attended social story training that they have used and shared with colleagues.
- The dedicated and skilful DSP staff ensure that pupils are focused and well supported throughout lessons. During a phonics lesson, the teacher was clear in the way she presented new learning to pupils using a variety of skills to engage and hold their attention. This included using Makaton, body signals and positive praise of pupils. Consequently, all pupils were on task and showed obvious enjoyment regarding their learning successes. The school ensures that pupils from the DSP effectively integrate into lessons at appropriate levels.
- Leaders have developed a specific nurture space, 'The Zen Zone'. This provides a space where pupils can go to calm and self-regulate. There is an emphasis on restorative and reflective processes. Staff support pupils in articulating their thoughts and enable them to re-focus and continue learning.

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

... staff further developed their strategic and responsive teaching to secure accelerated progress.

5. Area of Excellence

N/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 content reports from across the hub networks 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 network 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>)