



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR MULBERRY SHOREDITCH ACADEMY

Name of School:	Mulberry Shoreditch Academy
Headteacher/Principal:	Ruth Holden
Hub:	East London Hub
School phase:	Secondary
MAT (if applicable):	Mulberry

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	30/06/2021
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Effective
Date of last QA Review	16/10/2019
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	11/12/2012

Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising of 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 students and students with additional needs

Area of Excellence Accredited
Empowering middle leaders as agents of change

Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence Breaking the cycle of disadvantage
11/02/2019

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate 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

Mulberry Academy Shoreditch (MAS) is a mixed 11-19 secondary academy serving the communities of Bethnal Green and Shoreditch. Since September 2018, the school has been part of the Mulberry Schools Trust (MST) alongside two other schools: Mulberry School for Girls and Mulberry UTC.

The school is in Tower Hamlets, an area of high deprivation, and serves a diverse community in terms of race, ethnicity, gender and social class. Approximately 65% of students are disadvantaged and nearly 12% have special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND).

Over the past few years, the school has faced a number of challenges. This led to parents losing confidence in the school. However, since 2018 when the school joined MST, new leadership has totally transformed the academy and it is now a very stable and flourishing establishment. This is reflected in the huge increase in the number of students on roll. The sixth form, for example, has almost tripled in size. Parents are choosing the school because of the strong pastoral care, the academic rigour and the extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities offered to students.

The school is outward-facing and many staff lead local network hubs and partnership work.

2.1 Leadership at all Levels - What went well

- Leadership at all levels is very strong. All leaders demonstrate a maturity of vision and strategic direction. The executive principal is relentless in her drive and enthusiasm, which has led to a rapid pace of change.
- Senior leaders are talented and driven. They have very high expectations of themselves, staff and students. Governors are equally ambitious and share the school's vision.
- Middle leaders are highly competent, innovative and enthusiastic. Subject, pastoral and house leaders are a very cohesive group, and are all growing in confidence. Middle leaders enjoy and appreciate a significant level of autonomy and value the trust that senior leaders place in them.
- Leaders ensure that all staff have access to high quality professional development which includes in-house and trust-wide opportunities. Consequently, the workforce is very skilled and knowledgeable.
- Staff are highly aspirational and hugely invested in the school. Relationships are very strong, and students and staff feel listened to and valued. Students told

reviewers how much they enjoy school, and how they feel extremely well supported by the staff.

- The house system introduced two years ago has been a very effective vehicle for developing students' character and leadership skills. A vast range of enrichment activities is helping to build students' cultural capital in an area where many students' home circumstances would preclude it.
- Curriculum review is central to the school's work. Subject leaders have thought carefully about how to sequence their curriculum plans so that students know more and remember more. Middle leaders have focussed especially on injecting stretch and challenge into the curriculum. In lessons, it is clear that this is having a positive impact on students' learning.
- This year particularly, staff recognised the need to provide students with extra pastoral support. They went to great lengths to ensure that the support was targeted to need, and that students' mental health was a priority. Post-lockdown, this important work is continuing.
- Leaders are very attuned to the needs and values of the parental community. They are constantly coming up with ideas to engage them in the life of the school.
- Expectations of teaching and learning are very high and remained so during the delivery of remote lessons. Quality assurance systems are very well developed, and staff are held rigorously to account.
- Inclusion is at the heart of the school. There is a real celebration of diversity and leaders are very passionate about this area of the school's work.
- Careers education and guidance is very well led and is helping to raise students' aspirations. For example, more girls are studying computer science and increasing numbers want to follow careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

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

...leaders had a sharper focus on the evaluation of their work for cause and effect.
...senior leaders continued to find innovative ways to retain and grow staff.

3.1 Quality of Provision and Outcomes - What went well

- The positive, disciplined climate for learning is the bedrock of the school's success. The warm and respectful relationships between teachers and students and between students themselves are testament to the hard work and team spirit of all the staff who have developed an excellent learning environment.
- Students are eager learners and therefore their behaviour in class is exemplary. They expect to be challenged and they are increasingly ambitious for their futures and aim for the very highest grades. Increasing numbers of sixth form students

are gaining offers from Oxbridge and Russell Group universities.

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are passionate about the subjects they teach. They skilfully plan lessons so that students' knowledge and skills build in a coherent way. For example, in a Year 12 biology class, students were able to use their knowledge of biological suffixes and prefixes to work out the meaning of new words.
- Learning is assessed and monitored with great precision and interventions are swiftly put in place to support students who are falling behind. As a result, historic outcomes are above average for all students, including the disadvantaged.
- Lessons are characterised by embedded routines and high expectations. In the lessons seen, teachers had planned work for students that was challenging and matched to learners' needs. There were many examples of probing questioning which helped to deepen and embed knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Leaders have recognised that many students lack the academic literacy skills to make consistent progress, especially as large numbers speak English as a second language. Consequently, many lessons feature a focus on building students' vocabulary.
- Students are assessed six times per year to ensure that they have remembered and understood key knowledge. Leaders use this information to inform their planning and ensure that gaps in students' knowledge and skills are swiftly addressed.
- Teachers give detailed and timely advice to students about how to improve their work and students respond to this readily. Consequently, books show that students are learning the intended curriculum effectively.
- Over time, students' outcomes at GCSE and A-level have been above average across a range of subjects. Disadvantaged students and those with SEND have also made very strong progress from their starting points. Teacher assessments over the last two years of the pandemic demonstrate that high academic standards have been maintained.
- A constant and relentless drive on professional development is central to the school's continuing upward trajectory. Bespoke training is provided to meet the needs and aspirations of all staff members, resulting in a highly skilled and ambitious workforce who relish the opportunities they are offered to take on leadership roles.

3.2 Quality of Provision and Outcomes - Even better if...

...teachers ensured that ambitious tasks in lessons are scaffolded to support the success of all learners.

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

- Inclusion lies at the heart of the school's philosophy. The vast majority of students have some form of additional need and there are high numbers of disadvantaged students and those with SEND. The large majority also speak English as a second language. Consequently, the school has sensibly focussed on ensuring that teachers deliver the highest quality lessons to all students. Historical performance data demonstrate that this strategy is paying off. There is no appreciable difference in achievement between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students.
- Expectations of disadvantaged students are as high as their non-disadvantaged peers. The vast majority of learners are entered for the EBacc. In class, the strategic use of teaching assistants ensures that students' learning is very well supported.
- Leaders regularly gather students' views and respond to their requests. For example, film studies, law and criminology have been added to the options list as a direct result of student demand. Consequently, students are motivated to succeed and attendance levels are well above average for all groups, including disadvantaged students and those with SEND.
- Leaders' forensic and regular assessment of students' work ensures that all students quickly get the help they need to plug any gaps in their learning. Specialist staff support students with SEND with in-class and withdrawal work.
- Pastoral care through the year and house systems is extremely effective. Staff know their vulnerable students and their families extremely well. For example, during the pandemic, staff delivered food parcels and electronic devices to those in need. Mental health support was also provided and this will continue in the post-pandemic world.
- Vulnerable students particularly benefit from the large range of enrichment activities which help to build their wider skills and grow their confidence.

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

...teachers ensured that curriculum plans specifically state how students with SEND will be supported.

5. Area of Excellence

Empowering middle leaders as agents of change

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 been transformed over the past three years from an institution in which students, staff and parents had little confidence, to a thriving, stable and exciting place to learn. Much of this change has been spearheaded by a very talented group of middle leaders. They are highly valued and have benefited from the school's innovative investment in their professional development. Academic and pastoral middle leaders (heads of department, heads of house and heads of year) have all led on significant whole school developments and priorities.

Leadership is truly distributed and middle leaders have developed the skills and confidence to drive initiatives which have had a significant impact on the school community. The school can cite many tangible examples of middle leaders having brought about improvements in a very short timeframe. These include curriculum development, embedding stretch and challenge for all learners, careers in the curriculum and beyond, diversity and representation, growing an effective house system and massively improving provision for students' personal development. The journey of improvement and the strategies middle leaders have employed to bring about rapid and sustained change would certainly be something from which other schools could learn.

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

Evidence of impact, presented by the school, is convincing.

In February 2021, an experienced, external reviewer interviewed all middle leaders and cited a number of strengths such as: leadership of teaching, subject leadership, sixth form leadership and growth, leadership of SEND provision, enrichment and provision for personal development, leadership of PSHE, promotion of equality through enrichment, the house system and year group leadership and the leadership and management of safeguarding.

In terms of metrics, school leaders can show evidence that students' outcomes at Key Stages 4 and 5 are significantly above national benchmarks for all students, including for those who are disadvantaged. The school performs well above average in the Gatsby

benchmarks. The introduction of the house system has led to a significant increase in student participation in extra-curricular activities, which is helping to improve their cultural capital. Attendance across the school is very high, students have achieved 100% destinations at Key Stage 5 and increasing numbers of students are taking up offers at high quality universities.

Leaders have already shared their practice beyond the school to a number of audiences. This includes national conferences, Challenge Partners' events, local subject hubs, trust-wide events and primary school partnerships. Strategies to sustain and develop this area of the school's work into the future have been carefully considered and there is a clear and ambitious plan to support future development.

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

Name: Edward Rakshi

Title: Deputy Principal

Email: erakshi@mulberryschoolstrust.org

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

School leaders are already very active in Challenge Partners' events and lead on a number of local initiatives. They are always keen to learn from other schools in the network.

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.



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Both the School Support Directory and the Shared Leading Practice events can be accessed via the Challenge Partners website.