



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR MULBERRY ACADEMY SHOREDITCH

Name of School:	Mulberry Academy Shoreditch
Headteacher/Principal:	Melissa Gibson
Hub:	East London Hub
School phase:	Secondary with sixth form
MAT (if applicable):	Mulberry Schools Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	05/03/2025
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	The school chose to have verbal estimates for their last review
Date of last QA Review	24/04/2024
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	14/09/2022

1. Context and character of the school

Situated in the Weavers quarter of Tower Hamlets, Mulberry Academy Shoreditch (MAS) is a large mixed secondary comprehensive school with a very large sixth form. It serves the communities of Bethnal Green and Shoreditch in London. The school is part of the Mulberry Schools Trust which it joined in September 2018.

A very high proportion of students are from disadvantaged backgrounds, almost double the national average. However, this figure is likely to be much higher because all children in Tower Hamlets receive free school meals. Therefore, many parents do not have an incentive to apply for support. In an area of high deprivation, this results in the school being underfunded for supporting socially disadvantaged students.

The school celebrates an ethnically diverse population with in excess of forty languages being spoken. Two thirds of the school population speak English as an additional language (EAL). The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is slightly above the national average, including for those with education, health and care plans (EHCPs).

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- Leaders have a well-defined vision for helping students achieving their potential both academically and personally. The school is laser focussed on continuing improvement. The school's self-evaluation processes are pivotal in identifying key priorities which inform school improvement planning. In addition to this, the school welcomes many external and trust partners as part of the rigorous quality assurance cycle.
- There are six teaching and learning principles that provide the foundation for learning at MAS. Lessons are designed around these principles and each has its own pedagogical reasoning and approach that fit the 'MAS way'. This is communicated incredibly well to staff through a combination of continuing professional development (CPD) and exemplar materials in an easy to reference classroom practice handbook. The impact of this is that teachers design lessons using a variety of approaches to deliver content very well.
- Middle leaders are highly involved with quality assurance work, in addition to the collaborative leadership of their departments. They are developed well by the school so that they can think widely and deeply beyond their own areas of responsibility. This is evident in the insightful feedback they give in learning explorations outside of their subject areas.
- Inclusion and being part of a community are values which underpin the pastoral systems and structures within the school. House and year systems

interlock seamlessly to foster a sense of belonging and support that also faces outwardly to actively support students and their families in the local community.

- The development of cultural capital is prized highly at MAS. A diverse and equitable offer provides plenty of accessible activities, trips, visits and events in which students get involved. The house system supplements the enrichment curriculum well and reinforces a sense of belonging and identity. Participation is actively encouraged by all staff and tracked against ambitious targets to ensure that students make the most of what the school has to offer.
- The school is an active and outward-facing partner with the local authority and initial teacher training organisations; this allows them to share their expertise as well as improve their own. This is also reflected in being a national attendance hub that provides outreach expertise in this area.
- The character values of the 'MAS way' are constantly promoted in all interactions with students. These values of being resilient, ambitious, curious, communicative, respectful and reflective are used in shared everyday language by staff in a deliberate, relational approach that sets the tone for mutual respect.
- A well-informed and well-sequenced careers programme for Years 7-13 is forensically measured against the Gatsby benchmarks. A Year 12 student who joined in September 2024 from another school said that guidance he had received this year enabled him to narrow his focus into areas of interest without restricting him into just one outcome. He appreciated the clarity the advice had given him about his future.

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

... none identified

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Leaders' commitment to improving the social mobility of all students is rooted in a strong academic curriculum. Courses offered are tailored to students' needs and previous levels of achievement, whilst providing aspirational routes to realising their ambitions. As a result, there are very high retention rates (5 out every 6 students) into the sixth form.
- Each phase of the curriculum provides a solid foundation for the next with a broad balance at Key Stage 3, including Latin, that allows the EBacc to be highly accessible at Key Stage 4. Over four fifths of students take this pathway. The Key Stage 5 subjects that are offered to meet the needs of all students in very large sixth form cover a broad range of Level 2 and 3 qualifications that follow A-level and BTEC Level 3 routes or a Level 2/3 hybrid pathway.

- The curriculum is sequenced coherently with long and medium term planning. Schemes of work are constantly evaluated with department time used to plan, train and discuss pedagogy collaboratively.
- Coaching from an extended teaching and learning team for small groups of teachers ensures a multi-layered approach that develops subject knowledge, positive behaviour strategies and application of the six principles. Support is personalised well by the coaching team and specific to an individual's development. Early career teachers (ECTs) have extra support from senior leadership team mentors for their examination classes, in addition to the high degree of structured support they receive from mentors and induction tutors.
- Teachers structure their lessons well. They provide roadmaps for each episode of learning that breaks learning into manageable chunks. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, clear explanations of new content, using 'I do/we do', allowed students to learn a multi-step method securely in one of those chunks.
- Rigorous analysis of summative data across all subjects empowers middle leaders to revisit and adjust their curriculums as part of their annual curriculum review process. Thoughtful analysis considers both individual, group and class trends to ensure that no one is left behind. Formative feedback in books is equally impressive and departmental approaches feature a common core of showing the student where they are, identifying the next small steps and a task to help the student get there. This extends into the sixth form where students appreciate the folder checks that make sure that their work rate in and out of class is 'consistent and supports our active learning'.
- Oracy and language acquisition are promoted in every subject with tier 2 and 3 glossaries that are consistently used and emphasised in lessons, using strategies like 'I say/you say'. These give students the confidence to be 'audible' and use subject specific terminology correctly in context to refine their thinking.
- Reading is prioritised and the 'unravel reading' strategy helps students to interact with text and to develop their understanding of key words, making inferences whilst they read. The weakest readers are supported with phonics intervention.
- The purposeful climate for learning in classrooms has been cultivated through focussing on developing strong teacher relationships. The impact of this relational approach results in very low rates of suspension and exclusion which have been sustained over a number of years.
- All of this makes for a happy school where leaders are keen on creating a 'buzzy' interactive atmosphere in classrooms. This means that students are happy to come to school, as evidenced by attendance rates which are consistently higher than the national average.

- Historically, the school achieves very well with progress scores that meet the national average at Key Stage 4. The science department has performed notably well in the last two years after a significant rebuild.

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

... responsive teaching 'in the moment' made more use of principles 5 and 6 more consistently.

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

- The ambition for SEND students is the same as for all students. The main areas of need are social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and speech, language and communication. A small proportion of students arrive in Year 7 with a higher level of need and are not 'secondary ready', often a couple of years behind age-related expectations. A broad and adapted curriculum, adopted from a local beacon status school, uses an interactive and observational assessment model to capture progress. Taught by three specialists, this group has engaged well and boasts a 95% attendance rate.
- Main SEND provision is embodied in the executive headteacher's mantra: 'to work in this school, you are a teacher of inclusion first'. Teachers are expected to know their classes well and this is very evident in the universally detailed class contextualised seating plans which are heavily annotated by all teachers. This shows secure knowledge of the well-disseminated strategies that will work best with the most vulnerable and socially disadvantaged students.
- The SENDCo has strong strategic oversight of the 'quality first' provision and their work informs the quality assurance cycle at every layer when looking at impact. This is further enhanced in weekly meetings that cross-reference and share information with pastoral and house leaders to provide optimal support.
- The school engages well with parents. Two trained liaison staff from the SEND team are able to offer further help to Somali and Bengali families. This boosts attendance to school events, including parents' evenings, in addition to providing help with language translation and filling in forms and applications.
- Disadvantaged students are given priority for enrichment activities and opportunities. This results in 100% participation in the enrichment programme.
- The impact of all this work matches the ambition for these students. The achievement of socially disadvantaged students is close to the school and national averages for all students. SEND students achieved the highest Progress 8 scores in the school in 2024.

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

... none identified

5. Area of Excellence

The school did not propose an area of excellence for this review.

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>)