



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR
LEIGH ACADEMY BLACKHEATH

Name of School:	Leigh Academy Blackheath
Headteacher/Principal:	Emma Smith
Hub:	Leigh Hub
School phase:	Secondary with sixth form
MAT (if applicable):	Leigh Academies Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	10/03/2025
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Leading
Date of last QA Review	25/06/2021
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	13/12/2022

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 Leading

Quality of provision and outcomes Leading

AND

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

Area of excellence Accredited

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

Overall peer evaluation estimate Leading

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

Leigh Academy Blackheath (LAB) is a popular, oversubscribed comprehensive secondary school with a sixth form. It is based in the London Borough of Greenwich. The school is part of Leigh Academies Trust (LAT), which consists of 32 primary, secondary and special academies including one all-through academy and one grammar school.

LAB opened as a free school in 2018. There are now approximately 1100 students on roll.

LAB serves a diverse community. There is a greater proportion of students who speak English as an additional language compared to the national average. The school receives pupil premium grant for around a quarter of students which is broadly in line with the national average. However, this number is increasing significantly. For example, the academy receives pupil premium grant for over four-tenths of students within the current Year 7 cohort. The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) register, including those with education, health and care plans, has risen in recent years.

The academy is an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School which is authorised to deliver the Middle Years, Diploma and Careers Related programmes. 'LAB 16', the school's Key Stage 5 provision, opened in 2023.

LAB's values are respect, ambition, scholarship, integrity and resilience.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The passionate principal, supported by her committed, collegiate senior leadership team, has a clear, compelling vision for the school. The ethos of the promotion of academic rigour, development of character and empowering life-long learners is shared at all levels across the academy. Leaders have high aspirations and ambitions for students and staff.
- A governor and principal both independently asserted that 'the school is at the heart of the community'. Leaders are relentless in their desire for continual improvements and are impact focused. They understand the importance of having a strong contextual understanding to inform their careful strategic planning. They understand that LAB is continuing to evolve and leaders ensure they are developing provision and practice which is responsive to the increasing needs within the academy.
- The school's values are placed at the centre of the school. Leaders, teachers and students readily recall them. They understand these and can articulate how the values help to guide them. They permeate all facets of the academy.
- Leaders facilitate a wide range of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for all staff. Teachers, support staff and leaders undertake an

afternoon of CPD each week. CPD is based on academy priorities and in response to identified developmental needs. Support for colleagues can be bespoke. The 'on track' system helps to capture feedback given to staff. Best practice is shared amongst colleagues, including through the use of the 'IRIS' video technology. A group, consisting of a range of staff, highlighted the value they place on the professional development opportunities provided.

- Staff feel listened to and that their wellbeing is considered and leaders hear any concerns that may arise. They appreciate 'wellbeing Wednesdays', the trust medical helpline, the 'warm-strict' approach to behaviour and leaders' open door policy. Leaders are mindful of staff workload and time. Staff 'buy in' supports the positive staff retention within the school.
- Leaders, supported by governors and trust leaders, use a range of information to inform their evaluations. Data, from different sources, is analysed by leaders to understand the impact of strategies and approaches. Leaders have a clear understanding of what is going well in the academy whilst setting next steps for further development. These improvement areas of foci are well understood by staff at all levels.
- Leaders take an evidence-informed approach when implementing strategies. For example, when leading the development of whole school pedagogies such as retrieval practice, leaders were informed by cognitive load theory. Leaders drew upon research related to the fostering of 'belonging' to impact on attendance. Attendance at the school is above average with persistent absence much lower than national.
- Students demonstrate leadership through community projects such as the creation of a mural for a local nursery and their active involvement in supporting charities and foodbanks. There is an active student government. Students take the lead on key parts of the school day. In a Fawcett college assembly, a group of ten students led on a presentation related to International Woman's Day and the concept of equality.

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

... agency for all middle leaders was further activated in driving aims to actions.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Students and adults share strong, positive relationships. Staff greet students warmly and know them as individuals. Students enter the school calmly and well regulated. Clear routines are in place to support transitions. LAB is a purposeful, settled learning environment.
- Teachers have high expectations for students. Students readily engage. They demonstrate extremely positive learning behaviours. In a Year 7 LAB learner session reflecting upon neurodiversity, students were intently focused. Books

from subjects across the curriculum and for students of all ages show high levels of care and presentation, including many examples of quality 'green pen' self-reflections.

- Teachers skilfully use questioning to check students' understanding. In a Year 13 English lesson, students were analysing texts. The use of probing questions, including 'cold calling', meant all were actively engaged. As part of a Year 9 music lesson involving digital composition, the teacher quickly identified and addressed misconceptions. In a Year 11 history lesson analysing the Hungarian uprising, the teacher used well-thought-out questions relating to the contributing factors to assess students' knowledge.
- Teachers use retrieval practice at the start of lessons. This practice is well embedded and supports students to recall prior knowledge. In a Year 7 English lesson, students were tested on a range of different genres which helped to deepen their understanding. At the start of a Year 10 computing lesson using 'python', students applied prior knowledge to a new, challenging context whilst creating an algorithm related to prime numbers.
- Across subjects, teachers promote oracy. As part of a Year 13 mathematics session, students were expected to listen attentively to their peers' oral answers and then provide further explanations. They did so and provided clear answers. In a Year 7 English lesson on Shakespeare's life, the use of 'turn and share' supported students to have in-depth discussions and give detailed answers. During a Year 12 history lesson linked to democracy and dictatorships, students worked in pairs whilst reflecting and then fed back considered responses.
- Teachers used modelling to support students to be successful in learning. During a Year 7 drama session on traditional Italian theatre, the teacher's demonstration meant the students were clear as to what was expected of them. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, the teacher's exposition meant that students were able to complete tasks with accuracy and confidence.
- The strong personal development offer in Key Stages 3 and 4 continues in the sixth form. The continuation of the IB throughout the school helps to form a seven year curriculum. The LAB values continue to be promoted in LAB 16 alongside the IB learner profile. The 'core day' brings in organisations including 'Time To Talk', nurses and universities to support personal development. Personal, social, health and economic learning continues in Key Stage 5. During a Year 12 IB diploma session based on the theory of knowledge, students were developing critical thinking whilst exploring a Monty Hall problem related to probability. As part of a Year 12 IB career session, students used collaborative skills whilst working in groups and solving logic problems.
- The school has a broad and ambitious curriculum at all stages including Key Stage 4. In 2024, over nine-tenths of pupils entered the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) with students at LAB making greater progress in all subjects than their peers did nationally.

- There is a wide ranging careers provision at LAB. Students are supported with their option choices. All students undertake work experience in Year 10. The 'aspire programme' helps students to understand how the IB may support them as they transition into Key Stage 5.

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

... there was greater consistency in the use of thinking time, prior to classroom discussions, to further enhance the quality of all students' responses.

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

- The 'small school' system helps provide pastoral support for all. A group of Key Stage 3 students said, 'There is always someone to speak to.' Staff form positive relationships with families. Inclusion and pastoral leaders work in an integrated manner to understand students' individual needs and support early identification.
- Vulnerable students benefit from a range of structured, tiered interventions. These can include internal support such as in art therapy, reading, mathematics, and speech and language therapy. The school forms partnerships with external providers to facilitate additional support. Leaders use both quantitative and qualitative information to aid their evaluation of interventions.
- Leaders track the experiences of vulnerable students through a range of methods. Learning walks help to inform both curriculum and inclusion teams about the impact of provision. Student voice provides important information. Leaders analyse a range of metrics, including through the inclusion dashboard housed on 'LENZ', to inform further developments.
- The academy's digital learning strategy includes all students having their own Chrome books. This enables vulnerable students to benefit from adaptive learning opportunities. The school works with agencies such as 'CENMAC', alongside the digital trust lead, to ensure students have access to the most impactful digital platforms and resources.
- Leaders have identified increasing literacy acquisition needs. As part of transition into Year 7, all students undergo reading screening which allows the precise identification of needs. The school strongly promotes a reading culture. All staff are seen as leaders of literacy. 'Bedrock' is an online tool that supports vocabulary development. There is a welcoming library which is well attended including by vulnerable students.
- The school has a broad enrichment offer. Leaders strive to ensure all, regardless of need or barriers, participate in the wide range of opportunities including those related to sports, arts and debating. As a result of staff support

and intervention, the proportion of vulnerable students taking part in enrichment activities has increased.

- Leaders ensure that key messages related to inclusive practice and provision are shared including through the 'SEN spotlight' and whole staff bulletins. CPD related to inclusive practice such as adaptive teaching and vocabulary development has been shared with all staff,

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

... gaps for disadvantaged pupils continued to be closed through further intentional implementation of evidence-based strategies.

5. Area of Excellence

A values driven approach to Key Stage 3

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 places the LAB values at the heart of all that it does, including in Key Stage 3 provision. The academy has a comprehensive transition programme for Year 6 into Year 7 and there are primary school visits for every student. The purpose of these is to explicitly introduce them to the LAB values. The 'headstart' day and summer school are framed around the values. Students are supported to understand how to 'live' the values when they begin in September.

The academy's merits and demerits system is predicated upon the values. Students are taught how behaviours exemplify the values. Each half-term begins with an assembly on the theme of respect. Staff conduct learning walks to then observe examples of best practice related to this.

Students are explicitly taught how to study alongside the skills that characterise independent lifelong learners through the LAB learner curriculum. The programme of metacognition and self-efficacy runs from Years 7 to 9 and supports them to be resilient and successful learners. Each subject area builds on this by teaching and assessing the IB Middle Years Programme (IBMYP) approaches to learning skills.

The school's approach to personal development, including the LAB learner curriculum, has been shared nationally as an example of best practice by Ofsted.

The school could share with other leaders how simple, evidence-informed sustainable systems can embed school values into students' experience, learning and behaviour.

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

LAB students surpass the IBMYP international average. As students move through Key Stage 4, approximately nine-tenths have been pursuing the EBacc pathway over the past four years.

Student voice surveys show that students know these values and understand what they mean. Students can explain articulately how these values apply to them and how they contribute to their learning, behaviour and overall development.

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

Dan Morrison, deputy principal, dan.morrison@leighacademyblackheath.org.uk



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REVIEW REPORT FOR LEIGH ACADEMY BLACKHEATH

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>)