



## QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

### REVIEW REPORT FOR LEIGH ACADEMY HUGH CHRISTIE

<b>Name of School:</b>	Leigh Academy Hugh Christie
<b>Headteacher/Principal:</b>	Mr Palak Shah
<b>Hub:</b>	Leigh Hub
<b>School phase:</b>	Secondary
<b>MAT (if applicable):</b>	Leigh Academies Trust

<b>Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:</b>	N/A
<b>Date of this Review:</b>	30/05/2025
<b>Overall Estimate at last QA Review</b>	N/A
<b>Date of last QA Review</b>	N/A
<b>Grade at last Ofsted inspection:</b>	N/A
<b>Date of last Ofsted inspection:</b>	N/A

***Please note that Challenge Partners is a school improvement charity and not a statutory accountability body. The QA Review does not audit schools' safeguarding procedures, handling or behaviour policies, however, Lead Reviewers and visiting reviewers are expected to follow Challenge Partners' Safeguarding Policy and report any concerns.***

## **1. Context and character of the school**

Leigh Academy Hugh Christie is an 11-18 secondary school with just over 800 students on roll. It sits within a highly selective catchment area across West Kent, admitting many students who live in places of low deprivation. The percentages for disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) sit above the national average. The student population is predominantly White British, with sixteen percent more boys than girls.

The school's mission is for every child to be "happy, successful and well-prepared for adult life." The three core values are "being ready, being responsible and being respectful" which align with the Trust's mission, "Education for a better world." The principal, appointed in September 2023, is highly aspirational for his staff and students and is proud of the significant improvements the school has made since his appointment, particularly its inclusivity, curriculum and personal development programme, the strong relationship between students and staff, the students' positive attitudes to learning and the wide and varied enrichment programme. Throughout the review the principal emphasised, "We are one staff with one vision, we are a team working together." There is a very strong and infectious sense of belonging, cohesion and community shared by all stakeholders across the school.

### **2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well**

- Senior leaders have successfully transformed the ethos of this school. They are extremely proud of their achievements but are not complacent, recognising that the school remains on a journey and there is always work to be done.
- All leaders are committed to providing the very best opportunities for every student and have established a clear and ambitious vision which is embedded and shared by all key stakeholders. This is impacting positively on pedagogy and standards.
- All leaders have very high expectations and are relentless in their pursuit of excellence. These expectations are shared across all stakeholders and contribute to an ambitious and positive learning environment. One student said, "Teachers make us work but we get rewarded and supported," as demonstrated through the awarding of merits and the Friday hot chocolate sessions. Positive reinforcement and praise far outweigh any sanctions.
- Leaders have created an inclusive culture which is respected by all staff and students. One leader said, "It's everyone's responsibility." The small school model has had a positive impact on attitudes and learning.

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- Adopting an interactive style, leaders use assembly times to promote the core values and cover local, national and international issues. One senior student said, "We learn a lot more in assemblies than ever before."
- Senior leaders listen well to staff, students and parents, using feedback effectively. One example being the smooth implementation of its no mobile phone policy.
- There is a clear strategic plan to promote continuous school improvement. Middle leaders value the support they receive, know they are listened to and meaningfully contribute to the school's ambitious vision. Subject development plans reflect the school's improvement priorities, demonstrating a coherence to this relentless drive for improvement.
- Leaders have designed a rigorous, broad, and balanced curriculum that goes beyond the National Curriculum. Through the Middle Years Programme students develop all traits of the International Baccalaureate Learner Profile which prepares them well for their next steps.
- Leaders have introduced centralised curriculum mapping, ensuring that all subjects vertically and horizontally align to maximise student engagement and progress.
- Leaders are highly visible around the site and routinely monitor classroom delivery to support and challenge good practice. The quality assurance framework is rigorous and used appropriately by leaders.
- Leaders appreciate the time they are given to work together to develop pedagogy and the weekly professional development sessions on a Wednesday afternoon have proved valuable and effective.
- Leaders have created a spiral personal development curriculum enabling students to become confident, productive members of society. Students value learning about the topics in this programme such as mental health and well-being, anti-bullying, and the use of social media.
- Leaders ensure that there is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer, recognising the benefits of participation and they actively encourage students to participate, resulting in strong student engagement.
- A comprehensive careers programme enables students to receive sound advice and support so that they are able to confidently move on to their next steps.

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

- ... senior leaders ensured a consistent use of the academy's whole class formative assessment strategy, coupled with adaptive teaching, to ensure that all students' learning needs are met to further maximise their progress.

## **3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well**

- Leaders provide an ambitious curriculum designed to give all students the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. The curriculum is not limited or narrowed for disadvantaged or SEND students.
- The curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills, equipping students for future learning and employment.
- The school fully follows the National Curriculum and through the International Baccalaureate programme, ensures that there is breadth and depth across its three-year Key Stage 3. There is a broad range of subjects on offer at Key Stage 4 and 5.
- Most teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. In cases where teachers operate outside their specialist areas, senior leaders take positive steps to ensure the highest possible standards through bespoke professional development and rigorous monitoring processes.
- Teachers structure their lessons using an agreed model. In the best lessons, teachers present their subject matter effectively, promoting high quality discussion. They check students' understanding systematically, identify misconceptions accurately and provide clear feedback. Teaching is adapted as necessary in response to feedback and lessons are planned to meet individual student passport information, as evidenced in a Year 10 science lesson on radiation and a Year 9 English lesson on creative writing. Many students said, "I am excited about the next lesson" and "I really enjoy this lesson."
- Leaders have introduced Chromebooks across the school which has had a direct impact on students' learning. There are more opportunities for independent research and students value the benefits of this technology in lessons as was evidenced in a history lesson when Chromebooks were used effectively to carry out a whole class learning check. One student said, "They are a good tool for our learning."

- The academy's assessment strategy is well thought through. It helps students embed and use knowledge and allows teachers to check for understanding and inform their teaching.
- The academy's literacy strategy is designed to prioritise reading, writing and oracy. Leaders are now seeking ways to expand opportunities for reading and oracy consistently across the curriculum.
- To promote reading, students in Key Stage 3 visit the library for literacy sessions. This introduces students to the provision and provides an opportunity for them to foster a love of reading.
- Leaders expect students to produce high quality work. In most cases, the presentation in students' books is of a consistently high standard and leaders work hard to maintain these high expectations. Many students said, "I am proud of my workbook."
- Leaders have high aspirations for students and recent outcomes and future forecasts are key indicators of this shift. All leaders recognise the on-going challenges to ensure that the outcomes of all students continue to improve and are implementing a variety of strategies to further improve outcomes which include focused and targeted intervention as well as consistent quality first teaching.
- Leaders' high expectations are reflected in students' behaviours and conduct. The school has truly embedded a "disruption free learning" environment with a warm but strict approach.
- Students' attitudes are positive and they are proud of their achievements. One student said, "I want to be here. I want to get help so that I can do my best."
- Relationships between staff and students are strong. There is an embedded culture of respect and responsibility.
- Attendance and punctuality have improved significantly compared to national benchmarks and local averages. Improvement has been rapid but attendance remains a priority as leaders are now ambitiously seeking to shift it above the national average.

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

- ... all staff consistently embedded the pillars of literacy to further improve students' learning, enabling them to benefit from more opportunities of extended writing and develop their oracy skills through targeted questioning and verbal discussions.

... all staff challenged all students to take more ownership of their learning to deepen their knowledge and understanding and further accelerate their progress and improve outcomes.

#### **4.1 Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged students and students with additional needs - What went well**

- There is a very strong culture of inclusion which runs throughout the school, creating an environment which provides all students with the opportunity to thrive.
- The SENDCo and the senior leader for disadvantaged students have ambitious visions and aspirational targets which drive the inclusion agenda forward.
- Leaders are committed to ensuring that all staff are kept informed about students' needs so that they can plan to support them by anticipating barriers and planning strategies to overcome them. Systems are in place for staff to identify and refer concerns so these can be acted upon swiftly and effectively.
- Leaders work collaboratively with all internal and external stakeholders to identify barriers to attendance, behaviour and progress and provide additional targeted support where appropriate.
- Leaders routinely track the support provided for disadvantaged students and those with SEND to ensure that it is helping them to achieve and engage with their learning as much as possible.
- Leaders make funding available to disadvantaged students enabling them to access opportunities such as art clubs, sports events, school trips and Chromebooks. One student said, "Getting my own Chromebook was the best thing ever."
- All teachers have access to seating plans and detailed information about their students. In the very best lessons, teachers are clear about who the disadvantaged students in their classes are and employ a range of strategies to support them, including carefully structured and targeted questioning.
- Leaders consider the subjects that disadvantaged students choose and ensure that they are aspirational, escalating them onto the most ambitious pathways as appropriate. Leaders have invested in a whole school careers package called Unifrog, with disadvantaged and SEND students receiving priority support for information about any future opportunities.
- Leaders closely monitor SEND and disadvantaged students for attendance and these students are prioritised for phone calls home when absent. As a

result, efforts like this have impacted positively and contributed to closing the gaps between their achievement and that of their peers.

- The designated leader for disadvantaged students is responsible for strategically overseeing the funding, sharing of good practice, and monitoring the impact of the strategies.
- Small school leaders liaise closely with the inclusion department to ensure that students with SEND are monitored and well supported. The SENDCo provides on-going training to staff on how best to support students with SEND with a view that all teachers should aspire to becoming effective teachers of SEND.
- For those students who require more support than mainstream provision, there are many opportunities within the school to access alternative provision, for example, the Beacon. Students talk about being well-supported in these areas and where they feel safe and secure.
- An over-riding strength is that all students are treated as individuals with individual needs. All teachers are encouraged to know their students well and to adapt their teaching accordingly.

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

... the senior leaders for SEND and disadvantaged students continued to explore opportunities to engage students in reading and oracy to enable them to make even further progress.

## **5. Area of Excellence**

Transformational leadership to drive behavioural, attitudinal, and cultural excellence.

### **Accredited**

#### **5.1 Why has this area been identified as a strength? What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?**

Transformational, strong and consistent leadership have been instrumental in creating a positive and purposeful learning environment. By embedding well-



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structured routines through clear and purposeful expectations, leaders have seen a transformative impact across the academy, resulting in disruption-free learning, strengthened relationships, a calmer and safer school atmosphere, heightened student engagement, and an overall enhancement of the academy's culture and ethos. Relentless high expectations have resulted in a marked reduction in classroom disruptions and created a highly effective learning environment where all students can thrive. The success of this behaviour culture is a testament to the strategic vision and effective systems led by the extensive college teams which stems from a diverse and proactive approach which includes:

- Clear and consistent expectations
- Strong home-academy partnerships
- Celebrating positive behaviour
- Embedding consistent routines
- Focusing on personal development and soft skills
- Empowering and supporting staff
- Reflective reintegration processes

In a very short space of time, leaders at Leigh Academy Hugh Christie have driven significant and sustained improvements across all areas of school life, underpinned by a clear vision, a culture of high expectations, and a relentless focus on inclusion and student success by:

- Strengthening behaviour through strategic leadership
- Outstanding personal development provision
- Creating a culture of safeguarding excellence
- Enhancing SEND provision and inclusive practice

The approach to behaviour management is distinctive because it has rapidly transformed the school's ethos and culture. By prioritising student needs and fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment, leaders have achieved exceptional results, such as a significant reduction in suspensions, disruption-free learning, and improved well-being for both staff and students. This has created a happier, more positive workplace.

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

#### Improved attendance

	2023/2024	2024/2025	Difference
<b>YTD All</b>	84.8%	90.8%	<b>+6.0%</b>
<b>PA All</b>	40.0%	25.5%	<b>-14.5%</b>
<b>Disadvantaged</b>	76.7%	86.9%	<b>+10.2%</b>
<b>PA Disadvantaged</b>	61.7%	38.1%	<b>-23.6%</b>
<b>SEN</b>	68.9%	86.8%	<b>+17.9%</b>
<b>PA SEN</b>	64.9%	30.8%	<b>-34.1%</b>

#### Enhanced academic achievement

Module 6 (Y10) 2023/24	Module 3 (Y11) 2024/25	Difference
A8=38.03	A8=43.39	<b>+5.36</b>
Eng & Maths 5+ =22.8% 4+ =48.3%	Eng & Maths 5+ =34.1% 4+ =65.2%	<b>+11.3%</b> <b>+16.9%</b>
SEN A8 E=25.5 K=9.9 Non-SEN=41.7	SEN A8 E=30 K=26.10 Non-SEN=45.18	<b>+4.5</b> <b>+16.2</b> <b>+3.48</b>
Disadvantaged A8 DA =32.1 Non-DA = 41.2	Disadvantaged A8 DA =38.27 Non-DA =45.38	<b>+6.17</b> <b>+4.18</b>

#### Increased engagement

Positive behaviour events M1-M4	Negative behaviour events M1-M4	Percentage of points that are positive M1-M4
58,793	12,390	<b>82.6%</b>

### Reduced suspensions and detentions

Module	2023/24	2024/25	Difference
Module 1	116	27	-89
Module 2	101	42	-59
Module 3	125	13	-112
Module 4	119	24	-95
YTD (M1-4)	461	103	-358

Sub-group of students	2023/24 (M1-M4)	2024/25 (M1-M4)	Difference	Percentage change
Disadvantaged	353	85	-268	-76%
SEN	213	58	-155	-73%

Detentions	2023/24 M1-M4	2024/25 M1-M4	Difference
	6996	4312	-2684

Other outcomes include:

- Strengthening relationships through leadership
- Enriching student experiences through inspirational assemblies
- Investing in student well-being through a rich personal development curriculum
- Building emotional resilience and confidence
- Enriching student cultural capital

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

<b>Name:</b>	Mr Matthew Harris
<b>Title:</b>	Vice Principal

<b>Email address:</b>	<a href="mailto:matthew.harris@lahughchristie.org.uk">matthew.harris@lahughchristie.org.uk</a>
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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>)