



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR LEIGH ACADEMY LONGFIELD

Name of School:	Leigh Academy Longfield
Headteacher/Principal:	Felix Donkor
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:	18/03/2026
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Effective
Date of last QA Review	23/03/2022
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	15/10/2024

1. Context and character of the school

Leigh Academy Longfield is a secondary academy and sixth form located in the village of Longfield, within the borough of Dartford, Kent. The academy serves approximately 1000 students and is situated in a rural location, with many students commuting by bus. The proportion of disadvantaged students is above the national average. Leigh Academy Longfield includes a specialist provision for 40 students on the autistic spectrum, all of whom have an educational health and care plan (EHCP). The academy also has a relatively high proportion of students who are on the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) register but do not have EHCPs.

The academy is part of Leigh Academies Trust, established in 2008, which comprises 32 primary, secondary, and special academies, including one all-through academy and one grammar school. Leigh Academy Longfield is an International Baccalaureate (IB) world school and delivers the Middle Years program (MYP).

Leigh Academy Longfield's values are 'respectful, aspirational, caring'. The vision is centred on 'achieving beyond expectations'.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The principal, supported by his cohesive and committed senior leadership team, leads the academy with determination and a clear moral imperative. Together, leaders have established an inclusive culture focused on removing barriers to learning and ensuring that all students are supported to succeed. There is a strong sense of shared purpose, underpinned by a united desire to go 'above and beyond' for every student.
- Leadership is extended to staff at all levels and to students - a commitment reflected in the collective pride of the community. Student leadership includes a variety of impactful roles, including head students, prefects and the student council. Students also lead clubs and initiatives, such as debating, cheerleading and serving as 'mental health champions'. These opportunities promote responsibility and contribute positively to behaviour whilst preparing students to participate as active citizens.
- Leaders benefit from a strong balance of support and challenge provided by Trust leaders and governors. The principal works closely with the academies' director, who undertakes regular visits and reviews, ensuring both supportive scrutiny and strategic guidance. Trust-wide collaboration strengthens leadership capacity. Subject leaders engage in moderation activities while curriculum advisors work alongside staff to refine practice. Senior leader forums and cross-academy visits enable leaders to share practice, contributing to ongoing academy development.

- Leaders ensure that continuing professional development (CPD) is prioritised and carefully structured. 'Steplab' provides a clear framework for professional growth. A tiered CPD programme ensures that training is tailored to staff roles and levels of experience. Leaders use Steplab to focus on specific aspects of practice, enabling precise feedback that supports staff to reflect on their teaching. This has contributed to improvements in classroom routines and behaviour for learning.
- Careers provision is well developed across the academy and is highly responsive to students' needs. Leaders facilitate a broad range of experiences including career events and strong links with local employers and providers such as Hadlow College, Bluewater, and various local businesses. The academy is part of the Kent County Council's 'Equalex' modern work experience pilot programme. Careers support is tailored to individual student's pathways and leaders track destinations closely. Current data shows a reduction in the number of individuals not in education, employment or training figures (NEET). Sixth form students speak confidently and knowledgeably about their future aspirations.
- Leaders have overseen the development of a well-considered sixth form provision that includes a broad curriculum, targeted careers guidance, and a diverse enrichment offer. Initiatives such as 'Community Fridays', and a structured programme of work experience, support students to develop independence and resilience. Students benefit from a wide range of external input, including workshops and talks from alumni, which help to broaden their aspirations. The sixth form continues to grow, with an increasing number of students choosing to remain at the academy and others joining from other settings. Leaders ensure that students for whom the sixth form is not the most appropriate pathway are supported to secure suitable next steps. Students move on to a range of positive destinations, including universities, with an increasing number progressing to Russell Group institutions.

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

- ... leaders continued to embed systematic instructional coaching to ensure consistently excellent teaching and outcomes.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Staff ensure that consistent routines underpin a calm, positive and purposeful learning environment. Clear expectations are established and reinforced, enabling students to engage quickly with learning. Line-ups at the start of the

day ensure that consistent messages are communicated. Within classrooms, routines such as the 'silent do nows' are embedded. For example, in a range of MYP lessons, these tasks settled students promptly and were used to support retrieval practice to allow students to apply knowledge and skills. As a result, learning time was maximised.

- A strong culture for learning is evident across the academy. Students demonstrate positive attitudes and engage enthusiastically with their learning across all subjects. This is supported by the academy's work on self-regulation, which enables students to manage their behaviour and approach to learning with independence. Students' books across subjects reflect this, showing sustained effort and commitment.
- Relationships across the academy are strong and contribute significantly to positive learning behaviours. For example, in a Year 11 and a Year 9 science lesson, positive teacher–student relationships supported students to remain engaged with challenging content.
- Students recognise the strength of care within the academy. A group of Key Stage 4 students described the academy as a diverse and supportive environment, where they feel encouraged to achieve their aspirations. In a Year 9 physical education lesson, students demonstrated mutual support and encouragement during circuit training, further reflecting the positive culture.
- Self-assessment is embedded across key stages and practices are well developed to support students to understand their progress. For example, in a Year 13 biology lesson, students used prior examination performance to identify strengths and areas for development. Similarly, in Year 11 mathematics and science lessons, students engaged in structured self-review using past examination materials, supported by clear guidance and resources. The 'MYP' framework provides a coherent, unit-based approach to assessment, while 'challenge pathways' offer personalised feedback. As a result, students are able to reflect on their learning and take increasing ownership of their progress.
- Personal development is a key aspect of the academy's provision. The PSHE curriculum is carefully structured across all key stages, combining national guidance with responsiveness to current issues. Students access age-appropriate content that supports their understanding of themselves and others. The programme is centrally resourced, ensuring consistency in delivery. Students have an awareness of their own needs and those of others, reflecting the positive impact of this provision.

- The academy provides a broad, inclusive enrichment offer. To ensure that all students have access to meaningful experiences, a variety of cultural capital days, trips and visits are co-ordinated. This offer is further strengthened through activities such as an annual enrichment week, international visits and engagement with a wide range of visitors, including employers and organisations such as Network Rail and NatWest. At Key Stage 5, a well-developed super-curricular programme enables students to deepen subject knowledge and contribute to the wider academy community, including supporting younger students.
- Across lessons, teachers promote language development. For example, in a Year 7 English lesson, students explored the connotations of the word 'invasion', developing more nuanced interpretations. In a Year 9 drama lesson, students articulated their understanding of flashbacks, demonstrating secure conceptual knowledge and an understanding of key language. Students' books show that there is a focus on disciplinary literacy across subjects.

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

- ... teachers ensured whole class questioning is consistently used in all lessons so that all students think deeply.
- ... teachers ensured all learning tasks are designed and implemented so that all students think deeply.

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

- Leaders and staff demonstrate a strong knowledge and understanding of students. The 'small-school college' model enables staff to know students as individuals and respond to their specific needs with precision. This understanding is captured through pupil passports, which provide accessible information about students' needs, contexts and support strategies. Passports include pupil voice and access arrangements, ensuring that students' perspectives inform provision. These are live documents, regularly reviewed and adapted through ongoing dialogue between staff and leaders.
- Leaders work collaboratively to support disadvantaged students. The college model further strengthens this approach. While each college operates within a smaller community, shared policies support consistency across the academy.

Heads of college meet formally on a fortnightly basis, alongside regular informal communication, to enable swift problem-solving and alignment of practice.

- Attendance is a top priority, with leaders and the Trust attendance liaison officer working in partnership to monitor progress closely. The academy has developed a range of inclusive support to address barriers to attendance, including practical assistance with uniform and equipment. The 'Nest' provision supports students experiencing emotionally based school avoidance, enabling them to re-engage with their learning. Additional resources, including a life coach, a counsellor, 'ELSA' provision and the 'Strengthening Minds' programme, contribute to students' social and emotional development. The academy forges positive relationships with families. Attendance is above national averages, including for students with SEND, and persistent absence is decreasing.
- Within lessons, staff demonstrate a strong understanding of individual needs, which is reflected in inclusive classroom practice. For example, in a Year 9 art lesson, the teacher moved around the room to provide tailored support to students with a range of additional needs. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson on fractions, a number of students with additional needs were well supported and then able to articulate how their learning related to tasks at hand. Support staff make significant contributions to student learning.
- Leaders oversee targeted interventions to remove barriers to learning, ensuring students make strong social, emotional and academic progress. This includes a specific focus on literacy acquisition through the use of 'NGRT' assessments, programmes such as phonics, 'Lexia', '6th form buddies' and speech and language therapeutic provision.
- All students benefit from access to a broad and ambitious curriculum. Almost all students study a language at Key Stage 4. There is a high level of English Baccalaureate entry, including for disadvantaged students, reflecting leaders' high expectations and commitment to equality of opportunity.

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

N/A

5. Area of Excellence

Specialist Resource Provision – Unlocking EHCP students' potential.

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 Spectrum Centre is Leigh Academy Longfield's specialist resource provision, supporting 40 students with autism. The centre ensures that students with EHCPs achieve strong social integration and academic results. It provides local advisory support and drives specialist standards across the multi-academy Trust.

The Spectrum Centre prioritises holistic development, ensuring students meet ambitious EHCP and academic targets. By fostering confidence and social skills, the provision prevents school refusal and anxiety-driven absences, successfully transitioning all Year 11 leavers into post-16 education.

The curriculum is bespoke, tailored to students' requirements and reviewed regularly to ensure an appropriate level of challenge. As a result, students successfully reintegrate into mainstream lessons. Students and parents highly value the provision. The centre is held in high regard within the academy and remains vital for ensuring students remain engaged, challenged, and prepared for the wider community.

The centre excels in transitioning students into mainstream education using a 'school-within-a-school' model. This excellence is built into the infrastructure rather than relying on specific individuals. Practice is sustained through institutional frameworks, collaborative governance, internal quality assurance and external validation. Professional alignment is maintained through partnerships and continuous benchmarking against NASEN and Chartered College of Teachers research.

The centre provides specialist consultancy to regional SENDCos, sharing blueprints for building adaptations and inclusive teaching strategies designed to prevent school refusal. Leaders assist other schools in clarifying their provision and vision to better support students. This includes the importance of the physical learning environment, the crucial role of monitoring and tracking for evaluation, how leaders can



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understand curriculum successes and challenges, as well as strategies to build relationships with families and students.

The centre has helped to transform the academy's wider culture. High-quality inclusive strategies pioneered in the centre, such as sensory-aware environments and tailored scaffolding, now inform teaching across the main academy, raising standards for all learners.

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

Students who access the centre achieve well above their peers nationally. Impact is further evidenced by attendance figures in line with mainstream peers and the successful post-16 transitions.

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

Julie Mulholland and Julie Rance, SRP leader and SENDCo.

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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>)