



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW
REVIEW REPORT FOR THE CITY
OF LEICESTER COLLEGE

Name of School:	The City of Leicester College
Headteacher/Principal:	Ken Vernon
Hub:	The Jubilee Hub
School phase:	Secondary with sixth form
MAT (if applicable):	Aspire Learning Partnership

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Effective
Date of this Review:	06/11/2024
Overall Estimate at last QA Review:	This is the school's first review
Date of last QA Review:	Not applicable
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Requires improvement
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	26/11/2019

Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising 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	Effective

AND

Quality of provision and outcomes for disadvantaged students and students with additional needs

Area of excellence	Not applicable
Previously accredited valid areas of excellence	Not applicable
Overall peer evaluation estimate	Effective

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

The City of Leicester College (TCOLC) is a well above average sized, 11 – 18 mixed secondary school with a sixth form. The sixth form number on roll is above the national average. The purpose-built school buildings and grounds provide students with plenty of pleasant space.

The school's location within Leicester is an area of average deprivation. The proportion of disadvantaged students is close to average, although the student deprivation base is above average. The majority of students are Asian or Asian British - Indian. The proportion of students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is well above the national average.

The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is close to the national average and well below in the sixth form. The proportion of students with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) is well below the national average.

The school is in the county of Leicestershire and sits within Leicester local authority (LA). It is an academy converter within the Aspire Learning Partnership. TCOLC's mission is that 'every member is ambitious to develop all aspects of their character to achieve their very best.' As such, their motto is 'Ambition for All.'

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The impact that staff have achieved over the last five years is impressive. Leaders have a strong, shared clear vision for continual school improvement. Despite its size, entering TCOLC is a warm and welcoming experience, where smiles and respect abound amongst staff and students. Students describe this as a unique aspect of the school, as one explained, 'The community is really close together. People will help each other.'
- The impact extends to the classroom and student outcomes. New senior and middle leaders springboard improvement actions. They combine an evidence-based approach to planning and a data analysis approach to monitoring and evaluation. This means that leaders target improvement towards impactful actions. Governors support leaders by sharing in this planning and visiting college to monitor their areas of responsibility. As a result, leaders have achieved improved outcomes in attendance, parental engagement, student results, student destinations and student retention in school.

- Leaders use evidence against the national picture and educational research to guide their decisions. They share this 'why' with staff, in addition to the 'what and how', which in turn encourages staff to share this with students. There is powerful evidence of impact in all lessons and conversations with students. For example, students clearly articulate the benefits of the new school rules, routines and procedures and what it means for them. One student explained, 'Resources and platforms benefit my learning and life. They are very helpful.'
- Leaders demonstrate how much they care about staff with their investment in professional development. For example, 21 staff have completed national professional qualifications so that the college grows its own talent. Leaders are outward facing and attend local hubs such as for mental health, SEND, attendance, alternative provision and drama. In turn, staff engage with leaders and support their initiatives.
- Much of this expertise now flows outside of the school, such as facilitating on local teacher training courses, teaching at the university and running leadership groups. Leaders are identified nationally and invited to speak at prestigious conferences, such as the Westminster Education Forum and for SSAT on Covid catch-up strategies.
- Middle leaders successfully implement the improvements developed with senior leaders. For example, Heads of Years put themselves in the role of their parents and students to make sure the new mobile phone policy made sense to them.
- Leaders' plans to broaden extra-curricular provision means that more students take up these opportunities. As one student explained, 'there's sport and chess, but also a club where you can just talk to people.' Another girl added that she feels more confident to take STEM subjects following a conference trip to a local cinema.
- Students' holistic development is a priority and character development is a key strength of the school. Leaders foster an ambitious culture both in and outside of the classroom. Their creation and implementation of the 'four character' pillars is viewed as pivotal, leading to a community of mutual respect for learning. Leaders thread aspects of the pillars through the curriculum and the wider opportunities that students receive; staff thread them through all activities. Students see their importance, 'TCOLC is very big on character and it makes the school feel like a community.'

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

... leaders facilitated teacher experimentation so that they develop fluency and confidence in pedagogy, 'lifting the lid' on learning to help students make even more progress.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Leaders have designed a curriculum that is broad and ambitious, in line with the National Curriculum. Subject leaders have high expectations of what students can achieve and plan work that interests and engages students. Their assessments pitch tasks to a high level but provide scaffolds in the form of prompts and resources.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. This enables them to avoid student misconceptions and provide helpful examples. Teachers are clear about the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that students must learn.
- New expectations of the college lesson structure, such as the five part lesson sequence, are clearly embedded in the majority of lessons and support students who show high levels of active engagement. Older students were very positive about how these help them learn more, such as the 'big question' which helps 'you know what you're learning', the 'do now' task which helps recall 'even things back from Year 9', and the end of lesson 'show you know' because it 'reminds you of what you have learned.'
- Teachers actively engage students with frequent questions, using techniques such as targeted questioning, guiding students with whole class collaboration or returning to students if they have misunderstood. For example, when a student gave an incomplete answer, the teacher probed for understanding and then asked the student to give an even better answer. In the best examples, teachers continued asking questions that made students think harder. As a result, the majority of students are keen to participate and give their answers with enthusiasm.
- Teachers prioritise vocabulary teaching by explicitly selecting key academic or subject specific words and ensuring that students record definitions in their glossary. Students express themselves well when answering questions from teachers or unknown adults in lessons.
- In addition to well-planned lessons for oracy week in tutor time, teachers routinely reinforce the importance of oracy, ensuring high expectations for oral responses to enable students to articulate with precision. For example, when students give a correct answer but as one word, teachers request it again but

within a full sentence. In student meetings, visiting reviewers were very impressed with students' articulation, clarity and conduct across all year groups. They described students as 'delightful', 'thoughtful' and 'a real credit to staff.'

- Between Year 7 and Year 10, students read approximately 15 books in their tutor-led whole class reading sessions, practicing reciprocal reading and discussing questions. As a result, students borrow significantly more books from the library to read for pleasure.
- Students are exceptionally well behaved and mature, self-managing against college expectations. Lessons, tutor times and corridors are calm and purposeful so that students maximise their learning time.
- Students show excellent behaviour across all subjects due to consistent subject routines and teaching. Examples include, science students knowing exactly where to record their knowledge, Computing students showing positive and independent attitudes working on computers, and music students working respectfully on keyboards using their knowledge about beats.
- Teachers are a key part of the strong culture for learning. Students across all year groups made comments about their impact, such as, 'Seeing teachers encourage other people really motivates me to do well'.

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

... for those teachers where it is not yet routine, they probed further during new learning by increasing the challenge in their questions and targeting them to those students who need stretching further.

... all teachers built on their vocabulary development by deepening their word exploration and by checking students with weaker vocabulary orally, immediately after they write the definition in their glossary.

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

- Staff have the attitude that it is their responsibility to achieve ambition for all students. Students recognise and reflect this positive attitude, which one student articulated as, 'We are supportive and diverse. Culture day brings us all together to celebrate a special moment for everyone.'

- Leaders ensure students complete their programmes of study using a range of different panels to identify any barriers, such as day to day behaviour, SEND and attendance panels. Horizontal membership across panels ensures rapid identification. For example, the evidence for an EHCP application was presented to the LA for a new Year 7 student. Despite no prior information on the student, they still gained a place in a special school by the end of Year 7.
- Staff read a weekly pastoral and inclusion bulletin as well as a half-termly literacy bulletin. These contain all the information staff need to reach their high standards so they appreciate knowing where to go to find it all in one place.
- The SEND Co-ordinator leads a Team Around the Child system which works in collaboration with all staff involved with the student, recording and sharing good practice. Likewise, leaders track and monitor the progress of students with SEND in their interventions compared to their baseline assessments. The liaison and delivery work of the key adults plays a significant role in ensuring students have bespoke interventions. For example, Literacy Gold, a literacy intervention programme, helped a student to move from a reading age of 7 to a reading age of 14. All staff access this information through specific provision mapping software.
- The strong provision and quality assurance processes lead to positive outcomes and positive progress scores. Last year, all EHCP students moved on to appropriate post-16 provision. Provision for students with EAL is a key strength of the school, with teachers describing the support they receive as amazing.
- Sixth-former students apply for peer-tutoring roles to help disadvantaged Year 11 students to improve. Leaders train them in how to share their knowledge and understanding. They explain concepts precisely and ask probing questions.

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

... in order to prioritise increasing the most disadvantaged students' life chances, leaders clarified their enrichment programme which targets 100 per cent take-up by disadvantaged students.

... subject leaders ensured that all staff can articulate and deploy their strategies for their key groups.

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>)