



QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW

REVIEW REPORT FOR THE LEIGH UTC

Name of School:	The Leigh UTC
Headteacher/Principal:	Kevin Watson
Hub:	Leigh Academies Hub
School phase:	University Technical College with Key Stage 3 Provision
MAT (if applicable):	Leigh Academies Trust

Overall Peer Evaluation Estimate at this QA Review:	Leading
Date of this Review:	08/05/2024
Overall Estimate at last QA Review	Leading
Date of last QA Review	12/07/2021
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	25/05/2022



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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 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** Business Engagement 12/07/2021
and Post 16 UTC STEM Provision
12/07/2021

Overall peer evaluation estimate Leading

***The Quality Assurance Review estimates are not equivalent to Ofsted grades.
The QA Review uses a different framework to Ofsted and the review is
developmental not judgmental.***

1. Context and character of the school

The Leigh UTC (University Technical College) opened in 2014 with just Years 10 and 12. In 2017 it became the first UTC in the country to have a Key Stage 3, aiming to stand as a beacon of innovative education, nurturing the next generation of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) professionals who are equipped to make meaningful contributions to the ever-evolving global market. Located in the heart of Dartford, in comparison to other local schools, the UTC has higher percentages of disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A member of the Leigh Academies Trust, the UTC utilises some of the best facilities in the country for technical education but expects its students to leave reflecting upon the community and values instilled rather than facilities alone.

Beyond academics, Leigh UTC aims to foster a sense of community and belonging, emphasising the development of well-rounded individuals whilst nurturing professional habits (behaviours) designed with their industry partners. A unique feature of Leigh UTC, which aligns with the Baker Dearing UTC concept, is its strong partnerships with employers. Through such collaborations, students benefit from industry mentors and work placements, gaining insight to their chosen fields thus bridging gaps between academic theory and real-world application.

2.1 Leadership at all levels - What went well

- The exceptional principal and his excellent senior team are incredibly ambitious for the UTC. They are relentless in their desire for continuous improvement. The Chair of governors and the business community help to ensure that this UTC meets its mission to 'develop STEM professionals for the future global market.'
- The vision for behaviour, which is known as professional habits, is clear and built around the 3 Rs of respect, relationships and responsibility. These came through consultation with business, governors, staff and students.
- The continuing professional development (CPD) is planned, personalised and linked to the school's priorities. There is a session every week for all on a Wednesday afternoon with a different focus each week, varying from Trust-led to teacher-led activities. There is a middle leader meeting every fortnight with a variety of foci from curriculum to literacy to developmental consultation.
- Middle leaders are seen as a driving force in the school and are empowered to take initiatives forward by the senior leaders. They work collaboratively and have learned from the superb leadership modelled to them from within the school and from Trust curriculum advisers. One such example is when the

assistant principal for raising standards asks them to create their own raising attainment plan (RAP).

- There is a purposeful learning culture around the school with inspirational buildings and displays. Students have pride in their school and love to move up through the school. Each year group is given more responsibility for their own destiny and students value this very highly. One year 10 business student told us that he was very grateful for the opportunities offered.
- The school uses the International Baccalaureate's Middle Years programme (MYP) in Key Stage 3. They have cleverly developed their rewards system around the MYP values and have a different value highlighted every week. The personal development curriculum is also linked to the MYP, tutor time and personal social and health education (PSHE) which is taught as a discreet subject. Students complete a community project in Year 9 which has fabulous student engagement and is seen as 'rite of passage'. A topical discussion was witnessed in Year 9 PSHE which was both relevant and engaging about artificial intelligence (AI).
- The LBC (learning beyond the classroom) is an entitlement not a reward. There are three per year which help to increase student confidence, give new cultural opportunities for students, reduce SEND barriers and improve staff/student relationships. There is a diverse club offer to engage all students before school, at lunchtime and after school.
- Careers education and guidance is exceptional, running from Year 7 to Year 13. The provision is based around the Gatsby benchmarks and Compass Plus. All students are guided by members of the senior team in their Year 9 options choices. In Year 11, the school also uses its business links to show students what is potentially on offer in Key Stage 5. This has increased uptake by around a third with disadvantaged students.

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

- ... the school embedded further 'The Day' tutor time activity to help build critical literacy skills, improve reading skills and used it for all of Key Stages 3 and 4.
- ... the school ensured that every student attends at least one extra-curricular club.

3.1 Quality of provision and outcomes - What went well

- Everything is carefully thought through about the curriculum to meet the needs of the students and ensuring that the school stays true to its UTC brand. It is unambiguously ambitious for its students. It has a broad and balanced curriculum in Key Stage 3, gradually becoming more STEM biased

as it moves into Key Stages 4 and 5. The school ensures that it is accessible for all students through its student groupings and the use of its support staff.

- The curriculum is now seen as a progression model after work to change leaders' mindsets and understanding. Many subjects - including English, history, art and design technology (DT) - have had an overhaul since 2021/22. Humanities has been split to history and geography, and food technology has been introduced across Key Stage 3 and as an option subject at Key Stage 4.
- Teachers subject knowledge is exemplary and is constantly updated through school and Trust inset. The Trust has curriculum experts in all areas who help to ensure this happens.
- The curriculum is communicated well; students are aware of the big questions (golden thread) and could articulate them as seen a Year 8 English lesson. A large amount of subject specific language (Tier 3) was witnessed and showed a high level of challenge in both Year 7 English and Year 10 science. There were also clear and constant links to MYP learner profiles.
- Classes seen were purposeful and calm showing that professional habits are adhered to. Lessons seen showed clear structure and use of terms which the students followed like 'Do Now'. A mixture of 'cold calling' and hands up were seen and were skilfully used by teachers to ensure that all students were included in the learning in both English and science.
- Literacy has been a strong focus with students set on reading ages for English if they are below a reading age of 9.5 years. These groups have extra reading as well the whole literacy programme. The team use NGRT to test for progress and students can then move groups. There is very clear evidence of success.
- Key words were unpacked and explained in both English and science; this follows inset in working memory. Reflection sheets were evident in mathematics and English allowing students to evaluate their own learning.
- Students are ready for the next stage of their education despite many coming into the school with a values deficit. The school works incredibly hard to ensure that the students are ready to move up in every way, not just academically. It has the highest expectations of its students for dining habits and following protocols. Students can see how this develops through every year and are keen to move up to gain the privileges associated with the year above. This could be moving to a different space or a change in uniform or responsibility.
- Historical outcomes are strong for destinations and have been less strong at Key Stage 4. However, the school has exceptional raising standards practices in place and the results have improved dramatically.

- Relationships are the bedrock of everything in the school and are strong everywhere which helps explain why the attendance is well above the national figure for this UTC. There are excellent systems in place for attendance and these are supported by strong relationships between the school and parents.
- Key Stage 5 education is a strength at the UTC. Their STEM provision is exceptional, and the T level students are rightly very proud of their amazing work which was showcased for us.

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

... the school further developed its use of the teaching and learning drivers – subject scholarship, success for all and learner agency so that they become the fundamentals of every classroom.

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

- There has been a huge amount of work by the SENDCo and his team to enable students with SEND to thrive in all classrooms. Training has been provided for all staff on the autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), literacy and working memory. Students are able to access mainstream lessons due to this, as was seen in Year 7 English and Year 11 science. 'Classports' have been developed for literacy-based classes and numeracy-based classes. These enable staff to plan for the individual successfully.
- The SEND team meet with all students with SEND in Year 9 and their parents to ensure that their choices for Key Stage 4 are suitable for them.
- The school provides well for disadvantaged students. We saw exceptional practice in a Year 9 mathematics lesson with all students being kept involved and keen to participate in the lesson. Almost all students were disadvantaged.
- Support is given inside and outside the classroom for disadvantaged students with the school providing uniform where necessary and paying for trips to ensure that all students are provided with enrichment opportunities.
- Outcomes are improving for students with SEND and disadvantaged students.

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

... leaders further embedded quality-first teaching to ensure that all students flourish regardless of their starting points.

5. Area of Excellence

T Level Provision at the Leigh UTC

Accredited

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

- T level provision matches The Leigh UTC's vision to develop STEM professionals who have the skills, resilience, and flexibility to succeed in future global markets. In a Year 12 Engineering session, for example, skilled questioning and effective use of well-chosen resources ensured both established students and those new to the Academy were engaged fully in sharing and justifying their choices and reflections.
- Being equivalent to three A levels, the T Level programme focusses primarily on the development of vocational skills to allow students to enter skilled employment, higher education or apprenticeships. Students pursuing T levels benefit from spending 80% of the course in the Academy and 20% comprises in a meaningful industry placement that allows them to put their theoretical learned at the Academy into practice.
- The Academy has been very successful in working with businesses to ensure that student learning both meets examination requirements and fulfils an industry need. With its destinations-driven curriculum, leaders have pioneered the development of T level provision evident in its range of business partnerships and the skills-focused curriculum now provided.
- Since its first pilot cohort of T Level Digital Production students in 2020, the number of students involved has increased significantly. Currently, 73 students are studying T Levels across both Digital and Engineering T Levels in Years 12 and 13.
- Leaders have been proactive in developing the structure and expertise needed to ensure that T level provision is successful. They have established strong links between education and industry and appointed a Director of T Level, who delivers T Level as a teacher. This has underpinned the smooth

dialogue between the Academy and business leaders needed to effectively align student learning in classes with their tasks during the industry placement. One student shared, "I joined because I learned about the big-name businesses involved through the academy's marketing. I have since realised the great opportunities for progression into apprenticeships and degrees."

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

- There is substantial evidence of the strong impact that T Level provision is having on student outcomes. There was a 60% increase in examination results for T Levels in the 2022-23, with a 100% pass rate in T Level Digital. These results included an average grade of Merit with more students achieving Distinction in the occupational specialist content. The Academy's quality assurance and monitoring information indicates that a 100% pass rate in T Levels with a high number of students achieving Merit and Distinction are expected in 2024.
- Thriving on its partnership with businesses, the Academy is highly successful in sourcing and delivering the placement element of the course. Leaders aim for 100% of current Year 13 students to complete by mid-July and Year 12 students are scheduled to begin their placement from Module 6.
- Of the 2023 graduates, 25% of students took positions with the companies where they had completed their placements. 75% secured their first choice destinations at university or on Apprenticeship programmes. In the current academic year, five students have already been offered a work placement. Leaders attribute this success to the Academy culture of developing "Professional Habits", which employers regularly praise as a result of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students bring. One employer commented, "T Levels provision enables us to encourage more females to come into the world of manufacturing."

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

Name: Kevin Watson

Title: Principal

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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>)