

# ISA Awards 2024 Case Study: Award for Future Readiness

## LEIGHTON PARK SCHOOL

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### History of the School

Leighton Park School was founded in 1890 in Reading by the Religious Society of Friends, with a pioneering vision of education that placed character, equality and social responsibility at its heart. Established at a time when traditional schooling was often rigid and hierarchical, Leighton Park was created to offer a more progressive alternative, one that valued the whole individual and encouraged independent thought. From its earliest days, the School challenged conventions, promoting co-operation over competition and embedding moral purpose alongside intellectual development.

Over the decades, Leighton Park has continued to evolve in response to societal change while remaining true to its founding principles. The School became fully co-educational in 1993, expanding its reach to serve both day and boarding learners from across the UK and around the world. Today, Leighton Park is an

internationally minded community of 600 young people representing more than 45 nationalities. Its historic commitment to innovation, inclusion and ethical leadership underpins a modern educational model that prepares individuals not just for academic success, but for thoughtful, purposeful lives in a complex global society.

Leighton Park School's values – simplicity, truth, integrity, equality, peace, sustainability and respect – are not historical artefacts but active drivers of the school's vision for education in the 21st century. As a leading values-led school, Leighton Park seeks to prepare young people not simply for examinations, but for life. Its approach to future readiness is grounded in the belief that education should equip individuals with self-understanding, ethical awareness, adaptability and a sense of responsibility to others. This philosophy draws inspiration from the Quaker tradition of social action and innovation, exemplified by forward-thinking social enterprises, global charities and peace movements.



The School's vision is to develop confident, compassionate changemakers who are able to imagine a better world and who possess the skills, character and courage to help create it. This vision places equal value on intellectual rigour, ethical discernment and emotional intelligence, ensuring that learning is both ambitious and humane. It recognises that future readiness requires adaptability, resilience and a willingness to engage thoughtfully with complexity and uncertainty.



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## AIMS

Leighton Park's approach to future readiness is designed to equip young people with deep self-understanding and a broad range of transferable skills, enabling them to thrive in an uncertain and rapidly changing world. The School recognises that academic success alone is insufficient preparation for the future; individuals must also develop adaptability, confidence and the capacity to reflect critically on their own learning and decision-making. A central aim is to prepare learners to engage meaningfully with complex global challenges, including climate change, technological disruption, food security and social inequality. Through an education that emphasises ethical awareness, creativity and problem-solving, the School seeks to develop values-driven leaders who combine intellectual ambition with social responsibility and a strong sense of purpose.

Innovation, critical thinking and collaboration are embedded across the curriculum, ensuring that learning is relevant, connected and future-facing. Above all, Leighton Park aims to ensure that every individual experiences themselves as a changemaker during their time at school, developing the confidence and agency to contribute positively to their communities and to the wider world.



## ACTIONS

### Foundation of Self-Understanding: Approaches to Learning

From Year 7, all learners follow a distinctive two-year Approaches to Learning curriculum, which underpins future readiness across the school. This programme explicitly develops metacognition, collaboration, presentation skills, coaching and the responsible use of artificial intelligence. Central to the course is the development of self-awareness, enabling individuals to understand how they learn, how they think and how they work with others.

The programme culminates in the Fryer Project Qualification, through which participants undertake an extended research project on a topic of personal significance and present their findings formally. This experience develops independence, intellectual curiosity and confidence, while strengthening skills directly relevant to further education and future employment.



### STEAM Academic Approach

Leighton Park's nationally award-winning STEAM approach prepares young people to engage with real-world problems through interdisciplinary learning. Beginning in Year 7 with Enquiry Week, this approach connects science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics through experiential, project-based learning.

The curriculum places strong emphasis on critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving through subjects such as Engineering, Design Technology, Computer Science, Music Technology and Fashion and Textiles Design. Leighton Park is one of very few schools in the UK to offer Engineering GCSE, and STEAM-related degrees are the most common university destinations, including offers from leading institutions such as Cambridge, Imperial College London, Edinburgh and UCL.

Industry engagement, trips and applied learning ensure that academic study is firmly connected to global challenges, including the Fourth Industrial Revolution, sustainability and equality.

### Sector-Leading Personal Development: CAS and the Oakleaf Diploma

Personal development is embedded across the curriculum through Creativity, Action and Service (CAS) lessons in Years 8, 10 and 12. These lessons focus on transferable skills, leadership and service, fostering empathy, confidence and a strong sense of social responsibility. Activities include literacy partnerships with local primary schools, Sports Leadership, Duke of Edinburgh's Award participation and Maths Mentoring with the Royal Institute.

In the Sixth Form, the Oakleaf Diploma provides a coherent and purposeful framework for future readiness. This includes leadership development, first aid training, volunteering and ethical debate. The Ethical Changemaker Speaker Series introduces real-world perspectives from business leaders, social entrepreneurs and community figures, demonstrating how values-led leadership can create meaningful social impact.

### Climate Change and Sustainability

Climate change and biodiversity loss are embedded throughout Leighton Park's curriculum and co-curricular provision. Interdisciplinary initiatives such as Sustainability Week encourage exploration of environmental challenges from scientific, ethical and social perspectives.

Student-led Eco Schools groups have achieved the internationally recognised Eco Schools Green Flag Award, reflecting sustained environmental action. The community has planted over 1,800 trees on the School site and sponsored rewilding projects in the ancient Caledonian Forest. Practical initiatives have also led to reduced meat consumption in the school restaurant, improved recycling systems and reduced food waste, demonstrating how education can lead directly to behavioural change.



## OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Leighton Park's approach to future readiness has led to clear and measurable outcomes. Over the past two years, the School community has contributed more than 6,000 hours of volunteering, including 272 hours of literacy support in local primary schools. These experiences have strengthened links with the wider community while reinforcing the School's commitment to service and social responsibility.

Those leaving Leighton Park do so with strong academic outcomes alongside confidence, empathy and adaptability. They are reflective learners, effective communicators and ethical decision-makers, well prepared for university, employment and active citizenship. External recognition of this work includes being joint winner of the Green Senior School Award 2023, a finalist for Environmental Achievement in the Independent Schools of the Year Awards 2023, 2023-2024 ISA Senior School of the Year Award, 2023 finalist of TES Independent School of the Year Award and a 2024 finalist of the Muddy Awards Most Inclusive School.

### LEARNER EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTION

Feedback gathered through structured reflection within CAS, the Oakleaf Diploma and curriculum reviews highlights the significant impact of Leighton Park's future readiness provision. Individuals consistently describe increased confidence, independence and self-awareness, alongside a clearer understanding of how their skills can be applied beyond school. Experiences such as volunteering, leadership training and engagement with ethical role models are seen as particularly valuable in broadening perspectives and strengthening a sense of purpose.

There is strong evidence that the School's emphasis on transferable skills, ethical thinking and real-world engagement enhances readiness for life beyond education. The integrated nature of academic learning, personal development and service enables individuals to recognise the relevance of their education to future study, employment and contribution to society, reinforcing Leighton Park's mission to educate changemakers.

## NEXT STEPS

Leighton Park is committed to continual innovation in future readiness.

Next steps include:

- Further development of AI literacy and ethical technology use
- Expanded partnerships with industry and community organisations
- Deepening leadership opportunities linked to sustainability and social action
- Continued refinement of feedback and reflection processes to shape provision

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