

QA review of XXXXX Academy

1. Activities undertaken

- Meetings with the Principal
- Meetings with Directors of Learning (DoLs) in Mathematics, Humanities and Creative departments.
- Learning walks with DoLs in the above departments
- Learning walks during allocated Prep time
- Work scrutiny of Mathematics, English, Humanities and MFL student books
- Discussion with the Senior Leader responsible for behaviour and attitudes
- Meeting with teachers of History
- Meeting with Early Career Teachers
- Formal and informal discussions with students (around 35 in total)
- Observations of the start of the day, break and lunch times

2. Contextual Information

- Covid-related absence had an impact on staffing during our visit, which restricted the areas of coverage
- Year 10 examinations and Year 6 induction activities also limited the range of activities undertaken

3. Headlines and key priorities

- 3.1 XXXXXXXX Academy was last inspected in July 2019, under the previous Ofsted Inspection Framework, and was downgraded from Outstanding to Good overall. Outcomes for students were judged to require improvement.
- 3.2 Understandably, the academy wishes to regain its Outstanding rating, and this ambition is reflected in strategic planning documentation.
- 3.3 If the academy were to be inspected under the current Education Inspection Framework, then it is highly unlikely that it would be judged Outstanding, and our visit identified some areas where provision is not currently securely Good.
- 3.4 Sections 4.1-4.4 below describe key findings and recommended next steps for the academy. The highest priorities are also summarised below.

Priority next steps	
Quality of Education	Ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to study a full EBacc curriculum at KS4, including a humanities subject <i>and</i> MFL.
	Consider the re-introduction of Spanish to the curriculum at both key stages.
	Ensure there is a clear 'road map' for the school towards meeting the national EBacc ambition, and that staff and student are are of the full range of options choices and combinations.
	<p>Ensure pupils have more opportunities for extended writing during lesson time.</p> <p>Provide training to staff in how to teach impressive and fluent extended writing in all subjects, and to build this in as a commonplace activity. This will make a marked difference to all pupils' achievement.</p>
Behaviour and Attitudes	Pupils would benefit from a genuinely anonymous survey. They need to see that their worries are noted, known and are being taken seriously, and that action is being taken.
Personal Development	Ensure there is capacity for the effective leadership of PHSE, and that there is sufficient appropriate CPD for staff who deliver the subject. This is particularly important given the pupil feedback described in section 4.2 below.
Leadership and Management	The Principal should work with senior leaders to review and reshape the plan to include clear, achievable and measurable targets within a realistic timescale.
	<p>The academy should conduct a completely anonymous staff survey, using a combination of closed-response ranking questions and free text space.</p> <p>This survey should then be followed up by actions and a subsequent 'You said, we did' response to this survey,</p>

4. Summary of Visit (key immediate priorities highlighted)

4.1 Quality of Education	
Current Position	Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every teacher and curriculum leader spoken to was compelling in their desire to provide the best that they can for pupils at the academy. They also have the subject knowledge, understanding and motivation to make any changes needed to make sure that pupils learn well. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership of mathematics appears to be very strong. The Director of Learning is confident that she will have a full department in September. This is important, so that pupils (including those in Year 10) catch up with their maths knowledge and practice. However, the amount of curriculum time devoted to maths at either key stage is not sufficient, especially given the impact of the pandemic. As a result, it is unlikely that all pupils will achieve the grades they are capable of. 	<p>4.1.1. Ensure there are sufficient resources to support the continuing improvements in mathematics.</p> <p>4.1.2. Increase the timetable allocation for maths at KS3 and KS4</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff are positive about the information that they are provided about pupils with SEND, and the training that accompanies this. They say that this helps them to support these pupils well, in joining in and learning. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils with weak phonics and reading fluency are supported well to catch up. Strategies for improving reading include Direct Instruction, Accelerated Reader, and the use of regular reading age tests. Progress in reading can be clearly demonstrated. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The options system was mentioned by pupils and staff as 'straightjacketing' pupils' choices at key stage 4. This includes in the EBacc, where current Year 10 pupils said that they had to choose only one of History, Geography and MFL, and adults confirmed this. 	<p>4.1.3 Ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to study a full EBacc curriculum at KS4, including a humanities subject <i>and</i> MFL.</p> <p>4.1.4 Consider the re-introduction of Spanish to the curriculum at both key stages.</p>

4.1 Quality of Education	
Current Position	Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior leaders subsequently explained that it is possible to follow a full EBacc curriculum at Key Stage 4, but the message has clearly not reached all students and staff. Students also expressed disappointment that Spanish is no longer available as an option, and they felt they had missed out as a result. 	<p>4.1.5 Ensure there is a clear 'road map' for the school towards meeting the national EBacc ambition, and that staff and student are are of the full range of options choices and combinations.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school follows the MAT-wide curriculum, and has access to subject resources to support this. Schemes of work had been planned and sequenced collaboratively with subject leaders, but many of these have now moved on. This has led to a lack of ownership and accountability for curriculum implementation, and not all staff are aware of how far they can adapt resources to meet the needs of the pupils they teach. The Principal is clear that where there are existing or new curriculum booklets, additional activities are important to help some pupils build up to these activities, and others to work beyond them. Some pupils like the booklets, in addition to their workbooks. They say that they provide them with reassurance that they have a record of all essential information that they need. 	<p>4.1.6 Ensure clarity for subject leaders on the ownership of curriculum implementation, and what is expected of them and their staff.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MAT-wide curriculum incorporates common assessments at specified dates. Where some pupils have not been so well-supported to access the information and activities in subject booklets, they have really struggled to grasp and remember what they need to know. This has been evident at the assessment points, and does not help these pupils to do well or feel positive about their progress. 	<p>4.1.7 Some of the assessments planned for the 2022/2023 calendar might need a second look and possibly refining. Although we appreciate that there is very little time to do this, this side of the summer break.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pupils that we spoke to had remembered a lot of what they have covered in their classes. We had a good discussion with Year 10 pupils about their learning in 	<p>4.1.8 Pupils should have more opportunities for extended writing during lesson time.</p>

4.1 Quality of Education

Current Position	Next Steps
<p>English and History , for example about their views and preferences about Macbeth and A Christmas Carol, and the themes within the texts. It was clear that they knew, remembered, and thought a lot about what they had learned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, pupils' written work did not reflect the level of knowledge and understanding. Across subjects, staff say that pupils are better at speaking than writing. This is because of the activities that pupils do and do not do in lessons. 	<p>4.1.9 Staff need training in how to teach impressive and fluent extended writing in all subjects, and to build this in as a commonplace activity. This will make a marked difference to all pupils' achievement.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was clear that the daily reading during form is an important step forwards. However, at the moment, the delivery and impact of the reading curriculum is inconsistent from class to class. Some classes read together, whereas in other classes some pupils listen and follow whilst others do not. In some instances, pupils did not have reading books out. Some staff observed were not sufficiently confident or engaging in their reading. • Pupils also want more say in the books selected. They are bright and interested by reading; in fact, some of the older ones wished. • that they had more reading time in school, and were frustrated that line-ups reduced the time available for reading. They have a good idea of age-appropriate reading and explained why some of the choices this year did not suit the whole-class reading scheme. 	<p>4.1.10 Questionnaires for staff and pupils should include a section which seeks their views on the reading programme and suggestions on how it could be improved.</p> <p>4.1.11 Staff should be provided with further training on what is expected from the daily reading programme.</p> <p>4.1.12 Student voice should be considered in the design of future reading programmes.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In KS3 history, the curriculum adaption planned for September 2022 would mean that pupils moving from Year 8 • into Year 9 would not have studied the Holocaust, as part of this changeover. This is a compulsory and important element of the national curriculum. 	<p>4.1.13 Ensure that the current Year 8 have study of the Holocaust built into their Y9 history curriculum.</p>

4.2 Behaviour and Attitudes

Current Position	Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils' self-discipline in the playground at break and lunch is impressive. They are sensible and get on well together. Pupils spoken to were articulate and proportionate when speaking about the school. They know and notice a lot; they have a lot to offer in shaping the school moving forwards. Pupils try hard in lessons, and low-level disruption appeared rare in the lessons visited. However, some students mentioned that behaviour can be disruptive, especially in lower sets and in classes covered by supply teachers. Pupils do not feel that they have enough say in how the school is run. In fact, they say that they are not listened to. They generally like their teachers but wanted to raise significant concerns with regard to behaviour around school; bullying and derogatory name-calling, and their perception of some staff responses to this. They also say that they do not trust some adults well enough at the moment. 	<p>4.3.2 It is understood that the school day will change in September 2022 and that staggered break and lunch times will be introduced. This is a sensible decision, especially given the growth of the student population.</p> <p>4.3.3 Pupils would benefit from a genuinely anonymous survey. They need to see that their worries are noted, known and are being taken seriously, and that action is being taken.</p>

4.3 Personal Development

Current Position	Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils also did not feel that there was readily available support for their mental health, and that they feel uncomfortable reporting concerns to staff. 	<p>4.3.8 Ensure that pupils are aware of how to report concerns and access mental health support</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current PHSE curriculum is led by the DoL for Humanities, who also has responsibility for History, Geography and RE. There is a weekly timetabled PHSE lesson for each year group, but staff are not specialists and not all have the experience or confidence to deliver the material. As a result, some pupils do not fully access and understand statutory elements of the curriculum, including RSE and British Values. 	<p>4.3.2 Ensure there is capacity for the effective leadership of PHSE, and that there is sufficient appropriate CPD for staff who deliver the subject. This is particularly important given the pupil feedback described in 4.2 above.</p>

4.4 Leadership and Management

Current Position	Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The academy has an ambitious development plan entitled <i>Road Map to Beyond Outstanding</i> with a timeline from July 2022, when the plan states that the academy will be “securely good in all areas” to April 2023 when it states the provision will be outstanding across the board. This plan is logically sequenced, but is light on measurable targets, and the statements for July 2022 do not reflect the reality observed during the QA visit In discussion, the Principal demonstrated that he knows the school well. He is frank and accurate about the current challenges faced by leaders and teachers, and acknowledges staff morale is currently low. Some staff do not feel that they are listened to well enough. Nor do they feel safe to respond to Trust-produced questionnaires, as they do not believe these are anonymous. These staff have some clear ideas of what they think needs to be improved first and foremost. They really want their views heard and to work with the school’s senior leaders to move the school forwards. Examples of concerns include the behaviour system and how it is applied; reasonable workload; the school calendar; and ownership of subject curriculums 	<p>4.4.1 The Principal should work with senior leaders to review and reshape the plan to include clear, achievable and measurable targets within a realistic timescale.</p> <p>4.4.2 The school should conduct a completely anonymous staff survey, using a combination of closed-response ranking questions and free text space.</p> <p>4.4.3 This survey should then be followed up by actions and a subsequent ‘You said, we did’ response to this survey</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff feel that CPD planning and delivery is not where it should be. The information provided appears to be insufficient and staff are not prepared well enough to deliver the curriculum. Pupils do not rate it and say that these are some of the lessons where behaviour suffers. Some teachers do not always have their statutory PPA time protected. This has a negative impact on staff workload and morale, as well as on the quality of their teaching. 	<p>4.4.4 The academy should consider providing additional time and/or resources for the leadership of CPD, including planning and delivery.</p>