

The Excel Academy Position Statement and Characteristics

The Excel Academy opened in April 2014 as a converter academy. It is a rapidly growing 11-16 academy situated in Stoke-on-Trent and is part of the Alpha Academies Trust. The core values of 'pride and respect' permeate through all areas of academy life and 'expect excellence' of all stakeholders is key driver to further raise standards.

The Principal and Vice Principal were appointed in December 2015 and promote an ethos around those values of pride and respect, high standards and growth mind-set with all stakeholders. The SLT team are supported by a Group Chief Executive who operates across the Trust. The progress and impact of the work of the leadership team continues to be monitored closely by a Governors' Executive Board, which meets every half term to hold senior and middle leaders to account.

The Excel Academy is now the school of choice for an increasing number of local parents and, consequently, it is now oversubscribed and has large cohorts in lower year groups. (Ofsted 2016)

Whilst the vast majority of students are white British, there is a small but increasing number of children from ethnic minority backgrounds. The ability level on entry is below national average in upper years, with Y11 2017 below national average. The current Y11 2018 have an average profile. The proportion of students eligible for Pupil Premium is around 38%, well above the national average. 14% of students have an EHCP or are SEN K.

Results in 2016 and 17 indicate that the changes implemented after a dip in results in 2015 have produced improved outcomes in nearly all subjects. Progress 8 is improving and combined pass and strong pass in Maths and English are in line with national. There is a focus on improving outcomes in Humanities and achievement of higher grades in most subjects

The academy maintained a good Ofsted judgement in November 2016 and leaders are now focused on achieving outstanding standards and outcomes.

Characteristic	National	Excel	Comparison
Number on Roll	957	984	average
% Disadvantaged	28.5%	38%	Above average
% students from minority ethnic groups	25.6%	17%	Below average
% students with first language not English	14.4%	10%	Below average
Deprivation indicator	0.22	0.29	Above average
Average point score KS2	28	27.3	Below average

The Overall Effectiveness of The Excel Academy is**Good****Summary Judgements**

Key Aspect	Judgement
The quality of leadership and management	Good (2)
The outcomes of students at the school	Good (2)
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good (2)
Personal development, behaviour and safety	Good (2)

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. The Principal, supported by highly effective senior leaders, know the school very well, including its many strengths and fewer weaknesses. When issues arise, through thorough analysis of data and careful attention to detail you tackle them swiftly and successfully. For example, you quickly identified and remedied the reasons for some pupils' disappointing GCSE English results in 2015. Consequently, there was a sharp improvement in 2016, with pupils making very strong progress in English. (Ofsted 2016)

Achievement and progress in 2016 and 2017 in most subjects met national expected progress and progress 8 is around 0.

Performance in the Basics has been in line with national for the past two years. Performance in the EBACC is above national average and is improving. The academy is well aware of strengths and areas for development and has clear actions plans to address areas for improvement.

Area: Leadership and Management**Grade: 2 Good**

The Trust and the new Principal have set a vision to become an outstanding provider by 2019, a strategy outlined in the 2016-2019 Strategic Ambitions document. The mission is to make a lasting impact on the community with a language for learning that promotes 'growth mindset' with all stakeholders. The Academy 'expects excellence' in every aspect of academy life and this culture is clearly evident with students, staff and parents. Leadership has significantly increased the level of expectation and ambition required from all stakeholders within the Academy.

Procedures for self-evaluation, both at whole school and faculty level are now firmly embedded and work effectively. Leaders at all levels feel empowered and regular middle leader and focus group meetings ensure that all staff are engaged in the review and improvement process. Targets are SMART and challenging and the appraisal process provides clear accountability and expectations for all staff. Underperformance is addressed quickly.

Improved communication with parents and carers continues and feedback from parents indicates that the vast majority now feel that the school is 'well led and managed'. The website, regular newsletters and the increased use of text messaging and emails to communicate with parents has resulted in parents feeling more engaged and involved with the life of the school, and changes to arrangements for parents' evenings have resulted in improved attendance at such events.

A good, well balanced and meticulously planned curriculum provides students with a broad and interesting range of activities which meet their needs. The personalised nature of the curriculum

provides well for all groups and abilities, and progressive skills in all English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects are being mapped for years 7-11, to support improvements in student outcomes.

Staff are given fortnightly briefings on relevant and up to date safeguarding issues and then these are also devised for parents and put on the website. The website is well developed with guidance for students, staff and parents in all aspects of safeguarding. E-safety is given high regard with regular assemblies, PSHE sessions advice and guidance and the drive to achieve accreditation for the work through 360 safe.

Indicated by:

- *Governors provide very effective support and challenge to leaders. They scrutinise data about achievement, attendance, behaviour and teaching and ask leaders searching questions as a result. Members of the 'oversight and scrutiny committee' have the expertise to interrogate assessment information and identify key strategic issues. They regularly visit the school to check, first hand, on the impact of leaders' actions, and they use external expert advice well in areas where they feel they need it.(Ofsted 2016)*
- *Leaders at all levels understand their roles and responsibilities very well. Senior and middle leaders know that they are accountable for standards in their areas. Senior leaders are effective and respected by other members of staff. Middle leaders, several of whom have worked at the school for some time, form a united team who are committed to seeing their areas continue to improve. Leaders are meticulous and strategic in their use of data about all areas of the school's work. Data about progress, attendance, teaching and behaviour is collected regularly. Leaders then analyse it carefully to identify trends or areas of weakness. They also use it very effectively at an individual pupil level to identify when pupils are falling behind with their work. (Ofsted 2016)*
- *All students are provided with effective information, advice and guidance on subjects to study from Year 9 onwards to ensure they have a progression pathway beyond Year 11. The Academy engages with a range of external stakeholders to deliver impartial Information Advice & Guidance and careers*
- *All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Policies, procedures and systems are highly effective, very well understood and followed diligently by staff. The high-quality leadership and attention to detail present elsewhere in the school are also evident in this area. (Ofsted 2016)*

Academy Improvement Priorities:

- Review and refine the leadership and staffing structure to ensure maximum effectiveness and value for money
- Succession planning - Embed leadership development opportunities for leaders at all levels
- Revise the Appraisal process to ensure clear SMART targets
- Refine the review process for all areas of responsibility and implement process
- Develop a detailed questionnaire for use with all parents/carers to inform current position and future planning
- Continue Parent Forum/Community engagement opportunities

Area: Outcomes

Grade: 2 Good

The academy's assessment information, confirmed by inspection evidence, shows that pupils in all years make increasingly strong progress from their starting points because of effective teaching in the majority of subjects including English and mathematics. Despite the changes to the English & Maths curriculum this year, both departments have ensured that a favourable number of students have attained the Grade 4 and the new Grade 5 threshold. The Principal and Vice Principal continue to hold frequent meetings with both the Faculty Leaders of Maths & English to ensure the highest number of students achieve in both of these subjects, and this together with external support and guidance from such organisations such as PIXL help the academy achieve its goals.

The EBACC suite of subjects remain a focus area for the academy although there have been significant improvements in the Science results this year. The quality of teaching is improving through changes in staffing and greater leadership capacity. Performance of disadvantaged students is impressive with negligible difference in progress compared with their peers. This is due to a relentless focus on disadvantaged students progress through targeted spend on staffing and resources and regular 'Raising Achievement & Progress' meetings to provision support and evaluate impact.

The academy would like to improve the outcomes for the students who entered the academy as higher ability to ensure the progress made by the end of the key stage compared with that made nationally by similar students is at least achieved. A higher ability entitlement plan has been introduced this year, aimed at supporting all higher ability students from Y7-11. This is seen as a major focus area for the academy and much of the schools CPD and resources have been targeted to address this issue.

Indicated by:

- 60% of students in 2017 attained Grade 4+ in English and Maths, with 36% of students attaining Grade 5+ in English and Maths
- 26% of students achieved the Grade 4 EBACC certificate in 2017, showing a continued improvement from 18% in 2016
- In 2017 the Progress 8 figure is expected to be around national average
- Progress 8 in 2017 for disadvantaged students is expected to be within 0.1 of other students and not significantly different to average.
- 63% and 72% respectively achieved a C+ in Science Core and Additional in 2017.
- Only 1% of students achieved Grade 7+ in English & Maths in 2017

Intervention is strategically planned and shows good evidence of student progress. Year 11 were provided with a study room which was open until 5pm daily to support revision, and this together with a private tuition offer and after school classes provided a good support structure for students to achieve. Students in other year groups are also supported by intervention programmes (e.g Y7 catch up) which result in students largely being on target in the majority of subjects in each year group.

Indicated by:

- The Y11 study room was attended by approximately 15% of the Y11 each day
- Maths Tuition students improved ½ grade on average from the mock to final exam

Strong assessment processes such as the introduction of termly Spiral assessments have increased the rigour and accuracy of assessment and allowed leaders and teachers to identify appropriate provision to support students in achieving aspirational targets set by the academy. The introduction of Question Level Analysis following each spiral assessment has begun to further support teachers planning to address weak areas.

Indicated by:

- Projections in 2017 were accurate for many areas including:-
 - Grade 4+ in English & Maths, which were identical to outcomes
 - Actual expected Progress 8 was less than 0.1 from projections
 - Subjects such as 3d Design; Art; Photography; Textiles; English Lit; Maths; Spanish; Performing arts and most Sciences were less than 1/5 of a grade difference to projected
- All subject areas are now using Question Level Analysis after each Spiral Assessment with every year group.

The curriculum offered is refined annually to reflect the cohort and meet external demands. The academy has a strong record of supporting the uptake of the EBACC suite of subjects for a large proportion of the students and this has placed us as the second highest attaining academy in Stoke-on-Trent for EBACC attainment, whilst ensuring we are in a good position for government expectations in regards to student take up in the future. The arrival of new curriculum 1-9 courses

has been strategically planned across the trust and the academy has worked well with our partner school to ensure students are prepared for the new style exams.

Indicated by:

- In 2017, over 40% of students are entered for the EBACC suite of subjects, with half the cohort studying a language
- Our curriculum offer encourages the uptake of EBACC for the high and middle ability through a pathway students are expected to follow
- Schemes of work, from long term planning to topic planning has been developed over the year, with many developed alongside our partner secondary in the trust

Academy Improvement Priorities:

- Improve and refine the curriculum, through opportunities for challenge and engagement, especially for higher ability students
- Improve accuracy of summative assessment information through collaboration across the CAT
- Improve outcomes for higher ability through effective Higher ability Intervention entitlement plan in all areas of the academy
- Explore and develop effective teaching strategies and processes for preparing students for summative assessments and supporting students with areas of improvement
- Accelerate progress of Y7 on entry, through transition projects between Y6 & 7 in English & Maths
- Reduce gaps between disadvantaged and non disadvantaged students through effective entitlement package
- Build a culture of Achievement success by exploring key growth mindset characteristics of successful students/people

Teaching over time across the academy is good with the vast majority of staff demonstrating sustained good practice. Lesson observation data confirms teaching and learning is good, however work scrutiny and outcomes show that a small number of areas require improvement.

The vast majority of teachers have high expectations of students and plan and deliver lessons which ensure good outcomes. Stretch and Challenge, particularly of high ability students is a focus and staff have accessed training in September on this area and will continue to be supported in developing strategies that will extend our high ability students to bring their achievement in line with national achievement for these students. Formative assessment is used in lessons to identify under performance and misconceptions quickly and to plan for future lessons.

Indicated by:

- Learning walk evidence from both HoF, T&L team, external partners and SLT
- Lesson observations – including developmental observations completed by peers addressing areas of focus including teaching disadvantaged students and SEN K students.
- Student voice completed by HoF and T&L team focusing on student engagement and curriculum design

CPD sessions are created using a detailed diagnostic of all teachers' teaching practice. The diagnostic is visible for all middle leaders, supporting staff collaboration and support. Staff are encouraged to use the CPD not only to develop their practice but also to share best practice.

Likewise, this is also used to identify staff strengths and these staff are then employed to support peers across the Academy. Staff access external CPD largely through partnership with PiXL. However, internal CPD and collaboration through the Trust has been considerably thorough and has reduced the need for external courses. The Teaching and Learning team support the development of teaching and learning by offering CPD opportunities according to whole school needs as well as coaching teachers to sustain good practice. They have been integral to the delivery of CPD across the academy.

Indicated by:

- Morning CPD sessions, in particular, have proved successful with attendance rising to 22 members of staff in January (from an average of 7 staff in Autumn term).
- CPD from January – May has had an average attendance of 12 staff. 38% of staff have delivered CPD surgery sessions of their strength, based on the diagnostic.
- The cost of external CPD in 2016-17 was £1500 and there was a decrease in costs from 2015-16 to 2016-17 of over £5000.
- Internal CPD sessions in stretch and challenge, AFL and improving student responses to SWANs have all seen an improvement of over 30% in the diagnostic.

Teachers frequently mark students' work and are becoming increasingly aware of how to evidence and support progress over time. Students are provided with strengths, weaknesses and next steps using a criteria based methodology. Moderation of work has developed to include moderation at department and Trust level to ensure that work is standardised and accurately assessed. This also includes moderation from external agencies. Feedback to students is generally timely and there is evidence of a dialogue between staff and student within the books which demonstrates that progress has been made. Staff and students are familiar with 'Excel Time' and the Academy is moving towards greater consistency in the application of this improvement time. Students respond in green pen to teachers' comments and this subsequent work is then checked against targets set. The quality of staff feedback is improving in consistency after considerable CPD focus. All staff have accessed training that focused on writing purposeful comments that students could respond to. Further training on this will continue in 2017-18.

Indicated by:

- Student voice indicates that staff mark and return work on a regular basis within the 8-10 lesson time frame.
- Students feel that the feedback they get from teachers is useful (student voice Summer term).

- Work scrutiny by SIP identified areas for improvement within the Science Faculty. Training was given in Summer term and whole staff training in September.

Teachers set homework, in line with the school's policy and as appropriate for the age and stage of pupils, that consolidates learning and prepares pupils well for work to come. The use of Show My Homework has further developed this area and made it easier for parents and carers to support students. Homework has been developed to incorporate the use of Knowledge Organisers at Year 7 and 11 with a view to rolling this out across the school. This is to support students in developing their long term memory and teach them self-quizzing and revision skills from September of Year 7. All subjects have produced Knowledge Organisers and these are easily available for both students and parents to find on the website.

Indicated by:

- Reports from SMHW indicate that use of the website by staff has been above national average for SMHW use in each month from Oct 2016-May 2017.
- Use by parents in largely in line with national average
- Use by students needs to improve by around 10% to bring it in line with the national use.

Literacy is supported in the Academy through regular training for staff. A consistent approach to marking for Literacy is embedded and there is a focus on developing oracy – in particular to stretch the top ability. Students who are below chronological reading age are identified when they enter the Academy and all students are tested twice a year to ensure that Reading intervention is timely and that all staff can support with Reading. All students in Year 7 and 8 have an hour a week of Accelerated Reader and also access this in form time and in one lesson per week for 15 minutes. A buddy system is in place to support weaker readers and there is further intervention carried out in small groups to support disadvantaged students.

Indicated by:

- Learning and teaching diagnostic indicates that staff are using the Literacy codes when marking books. This needs to be extended to ensure that extended writing is taught consistently across the Academy.
- STAR reading test data.
- Accelerated Reading data

Academy Improvement Priorities:

All Teaching is good or better (with the exception of NQTs and those training to become teachers) with increased proportion of outstanding teaching

1. Developmental T&L training driven by middle leaders and quality assured by SLT
2. Students below expected chronological reading age to access intervention (TA intervention groups / Accelerated Reading lessons / form tutor support / Reading buddies) to support rapid progression
3. High ability students are consistently challenged in lessons (through challenging lesson outcomes, effective feedback and focused homework) to allow them to make improved progress.

Attendance and Punctuality

Students value their education and are proud to attend the Academy. Attendance is above national average this year and continues an upward trend, indicated by Attendance rates which have improved for 3 consecutive years. Clear procedures are in place to monitor attendance and effective intervention strategies have led to a downward trajectory in the percentage of PA students. The attendance of Disadvantaged students is higher than the national average for similar students, whilst EAL students have an excellent attendance level, which indicates the value they place on education and is testament to the support structures in place for these students to ensure the Academy is a place they enjoy attending.

Punctuality to school is on an upward trajectory with a robust monitoring and sanction system in place. The new sanctioning process introduced in 2016-17 had an immediate impact on the number of students arriving late to school. In the isolated cases of lateness Heads of Year intervene swiftly, ensuring the issue is addressed and the student rectifies the problem immediately.

Indicated by:

- The whole school attendance trend has improved over the past 3 years and at 95.7% puts the Academy in the top 30% of schools nationally.
- The attendance of Disadvantaged students has risen to 94.24% which is 1.5% higher than similar students nationally.
- The attendance of the Academy's EAL students is 96.34% which is above the national average for all students.
- Punctuality to school records show there has been a dramatic decrease regarding students late to school.

Behaviour & Exclusions

The behaviour and safety of students at The Excel Academy is Good. Students' conduct and behaviour reflects the Academy's effective strategies to promote high standards. The Academy's key values of Pride and Respect are integral to all aspects of Academy life, and have been the driving force in improving standards. Recently the Academy's drive to instil a Growth Mindset in all students has led to a number of mindset principles becoming part of the education in lessons and assemblies.

The Academy looks to reward positive behaviour at all times and uses its 'Order of Merit' system to celebrate and reward positive behaviour in the classroom and beyond.

Behaviour outside lessons is good. There is a calm and orderly environment where the students' pride in the Academy is shown by their excellent conduct, manners, punctuality and smart appearance. High visibility of staff at lesson changeover and during break ensures students move with purpose to their next lesson and socialise maturely during break and lunch.

Pastoral systems are well embedded and are appreciated by students and parents. Students' preparedness for learning is monitored daily ensuring any problems are picked up and rectified by the form tutor.

Students have a vast range of leadership opportunities at the Academy and are supported in these roles to ensure the skills they require are developed to good effect. The students contribute fully to discussions about their Academy and are able to input into the development of initiatives within the Academy.

Exclusion rates for the current Academic year are broadly in line with last year and are below the national average for secondary schools. This is despite the Academy having seen an influx of challenging students directed to us, some of whom have struggled to meet the standards and expectations of the Academy. Excel will not compromise on its high standards and continues to

deal with poor behaviour swiftly and appropriately. The Academy has introduced strategies to help reduce repeat exclusions, and has strengthened its Behaviour Support provision with the employment of a Behaviour Support Manager, who works with some of our most vulnerable students who are considered to be at risk of exclusion.

Indicated by:

- The findings of Ofsted during their most recent inspection (November 2016).
- Weekly behaviour data analysis, shows the number of low level behaviour incidents are rare and daily analysis of students' uniform and equipment ensures standards are continually high.
- The number of students eligible to take part in Rewards activities has increased significantly indicating the increase in behaviour standards across the Academy.
- Observed behaviour of students around the Academy during unstructured times.
- Visitors to the Academy comment on the attitudes and behaviour of our young people. In a similar way, we receive many positive comments following school visits and trips.
- A growth in the Student Leadership programme to incorporate Prefects, Peer Mediators, Ambassadors, Reading Ambassadors, Form Captains, Sports Captains, Student Executives and Year Councils.
- Fixed term exclusion rate for 2016-17 is 6.8% compared to a national average of 7.6% for secondary schools.
- Excellent parental feedback received relating to the work of the Behaviour Support Manager.
- Improved behaviour data of students working with the Behaviour Support Manager.

Safeguarding and student welfare

Students report that they feel safe around the Academy. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality. Policies, procedures and systems are highly effective, very well understood and followed diligently by staff. Bullying is rare and is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Students are offered a wide variety of support if they are identified through referral meetings or through the self-referral process. The Academy is committed to celebrating equality and diversity to ensure all students feel included in the school community. Families are supported by the school through Early Help action plans, parental support groups, useful links on the Academy website and Safeguarding briefings.

Indicated by:

- Student voice
- Reporting systems such as 'My Concern', Student help button and the Bullying button
- Number of students accessing support internally or via external agencies
- Student leadership groups for equality and diversity, anti-bullying ambassadors and peer mediators
- Number of CP, CIN and Early Help plans

Personal Development

The Academy assembly schedule, in addition to constructive form time routines and increased curriculum time for SMSC, ensures students are acutely aware of how good attitudes and behaviour contribute to school life, adult life and life in modern Britain. Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural learning is part of the daily routine of every student and the profile of SMSC across the curriculum has been developed during 2016-17. Academy values are discussed explicitly on a weekly basis in form time across all year groups. The Academy actively promotes British Values which are taught implicitly in all curriculum areas. Students understand the necessity to follow rules, show respect for others and their opinions, and they embrace the beliefs and cultures of others.

Indicated by:

- SMSC values of the Academy displayed in every classroom and discussed regularly in form time and during Assemblies.
- Students being involved in a range of activities within the Academy designed to raise understanding of life in Modern Britain (mock elections, a range of charity fundraising events and activities, external speakers, enrichment activities).
- Collaborative work between the SMSC lead at the Academy and the lead across the Trust.

- Completion of a Health Related Questionnaire in association with the LA to steer SMSC provision to meet the needs of the school.
- Challenging and thought provoking PSHE sessions addressing essential topics such as drugs and alcohol awareness, anti-social behaviour and its dangers, child sexual exploitation, internet safety.

Academy Improvement Priorities:

1. To reduce the number of fixed term exclusions and ensure that where used they are more effective in improving the behaviour of those students.
2. To improve the Attendance of key sub groups, bringing all students closer to the National Average, and ensuring the Academy's attendance as a whole remains in the top 30% of schools nationally.
3. To further reduce the level of Persistent Absenteeism for key sub groups.
4. To ensure punctuality to lessons is outstanding.
5. To increase Student Leadership opportunities across the Academy, developing an ethos of personal responsibility and ownership amongst students.
6. To enhance careers guidance by working in association with the BITC and LEP, and providing opportunities for students to work alongside businesses and local enterprises.
7. To ensure the SMSC provision for all students is outstanding.
8. To ensure that any form of bullying is dealt with swiftly and effectively, so that all students feel safe and happy.
9. To ensure unstructured time is calm and safe in all areas of the Academy.
10. To review the behaviour culture within the Academy to contribute towards the next steps in ensuring students, staff and parents continue to be committed to creating an outstanding learning environment.