

An important message from our Chairman of Governors

Ofsted Inspection

As you know, our school received an inspection visit from Ofsted on Friday 22nd March. The purpose of the visit was to see how well we cater for our most able students (defined as approximately the top 30%) and formed part of a series of survey inspections across the country. John Daniel, HMI, was very impressed with what he saw. He asked us to convey his thanks to both staff and students and wished the school well for the future.

The feedback from survey inspections is presented in two sections: main points and judgements. The judgements use the Ofsted four point scale with 1 being the highest. Mr Daniel's feedback is reproduced below.

Main points:

- The Academy Trust arrangement serves students very well as links between the Upper School and feeder schools are well established in order to gain an accurate profile of students entering the school in Year 9
- High expectations linked to challenging targets and challenge in the classroom secure levels of attainment and progress which are well above the national average. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are actively encouraged to aim as high as those who are not.
- Assessment systems are used very well to ensure students remain on track to succeed and the risk of underachieving is low, as a variety of successful intervention strategies are implemented in a timely fashion.
- The setting of students from the outset allows teachers to plan for learning, where the needs of the most able are very well met. Homework is regular and consolidates the learning very well. Extension tasks are used to provide suitable challenge. A huge range of enrichment activities for all students, some of which target or attract the most able, develop students' independence and confidence. GCSE Astronomy, Japanese and Latin, public speaking, mathematics challenges represent just a few of the vast range of individual activities available together with an exemplary extra-curricular programme for sport, music and all the performing arts.
- Guidance to students when entering the school, making GCSE choices, opting for A Levels or universities is of a very high standard. The school successfully engages parents and carers in the process. All students in the sixth form are encouraged to aim high and students report they feel exceptionally well guided in applying to higher education institutions. Support for students applying to Oxbridge is strong. The two groups of students interviewed were both delightful and impressive.

Judgements

Transfer, transition and induction : 1

The school has excellent links with feeder schools. It finds out who the most able students are, including those who are able but underachieving. A well-established transfer and transition programme is in place including activities for the most able. The school uses a wide range of other information to support its decisions about grouping. The school has a clear induction programme

for the most able. Extremely high expectations are established by the school leaders and staff for the brightest pupils from the start. Strong links are established with parents and carers of the most able from the outset.

Most able achievement : 1

The overwhelming majority of the most able students make good or better progress throughout Key Stage 3, 4 and 5. They attain extremely well. Consequently their results at GCSE show that the vast majority attain the highest levels such as A/A* at GCSE and A level in a range of academic subjects.

Teaching, learning and assessment : 1

The school's organisation for teaching and learning meets the needs of the most able extremely well. Thorough and comprehensive assessment systems track each student's progress well and a wide range of intervention programmes are in place for those in danger of falling behind. These are implemented in a timely manner. Students have extremely challenging targets, they know what they are and they know what they need to do to improve. Students feel very well challenged. The overwhelming majority attain the highest grades at GCSE and A level in a range of academic subjects.

Curriculum : 1

The curriculum is carefully matched to the needs of the brightest students. They are placed in groups and sets designed to extend their thinking and learning. Homework is regular, challenging and tailored to their specific needs. Extension tasks are routinely provided. A wide range of enrichment opportunities are provided for the brightest students in each year.

Support and guidance : 1

The school provides excellent support in guiding students when making choices at GCSE and A level. This is done in good time and parents and carers are involved in the dialogue. Academic courses are given extremely high priority and students are guided towards these options. The school engages with students frequently about university choices and options. Information is provided well in advance. Frequent links are established with universities to promote higher education to students. Most students are encouraged to apply to top universities. Excellent support is provided for students when completing their UCAS forms and personal statements.

On behalf of the governing body, I congratulate the school on another exemplary report and thank the staff for all they do to ensure we maintain such excellent standards for the benefit of all the students here.



Dr R Fletcher