

## Assessor's Report

Following portfolio and audit day assessment

**School: Oxford Spires Academy**

### Summary of Strengths:

#### Portfolio scrutiny, interview and work samples

- The philosophy, culture and ethos of Oxford Spires Academy are extremely aspirational and all encompassing. They are reflected in both the school mission statement "Be the best you can be" and core objectives, as described in the school prospectus and bespoke Able Gifted and Talented prospectus, which outlines the Academy's focus and commitment to providing targeted opportunities both in and outside the classroom for this group of learners.
- It is clear that the above ideals are translated into practice, as one student reflected "Very few things limit our learning."
- The school regularly celebrates achievements from academic success to sporting, art, music and drama. Displays in public spaces celebrate group and individual successes.
- Carefully structured leadership ensures AG&T provision is integral to good teaching and learning. Within the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) an Assistant Headteacher line-manages and works with the Able Gifted and Talented Co-ordinator to ensure provision is embedded through the school's core focus on Teaching and Learning.
- The staff themselves recognise the strength of the focus on the Teaching and Learning they commented on the weekly Teaching and Learning bulletin which enabled them to share best practice. New staff follow a substantial induction programme which includes provision for able learners. As a result, the school has a wealth of thorough, reflective evidence that shows continually strengthening practice.
- The A&G&T identification process is robust, transparent and on-going. It has been developed with staff and a range of strategies are used to review student ability, starting with department staff nominations which are then supported by data. Each subject area regularly discusses identified students against agreed subject criteria but equally opens department opportunities to other students who show prowess. Students are made aware of the importance the school places on students identified as more able by, for example, being interviewed by the Headteacher.
- The well-informed gifted and talented policy is embedded in other school policies, including the Teaching and Learning Policy, securely underpinning high quality provision. Schemes of work have integral support for able learners. All departments have striven to ensure able learners are provided with alternative work to challenge them from the outset.
- Flexible groupings have been used to challenge advance learners, including students from Key Stage 3 being provided with GCSE work and access to GCSE groups. Departments have also made judicious choices about programmes of study to challenge students, for example in Mathematics Further Maths at GCSE taught alongside the traditional GCSE has been introduced to ensure the number of students attaining the highest grades increases and supports transition to A level studies.
- High aspirations for provision and accountability are well planned, based on meticulous auditing of existing provision; there are clear links to both the Academy Development Plan and SEF, resulting in increased challenge for able learners being understood and accepted by all staff.
- The school tracking system embodies high expectations for all and is used consistently to

monitor the progress of all students. All data is reviewed and discussed by a range of different staff groups, including a thorough analysis of the More Able Gifted and Talented cohort to ensure no student is at risk of underachieving. Clear links are in place with the SEN department to support individual students with dual exceptionalities with appropriate structured provision. Identified student needs are supported with EEP's.

- Enrichment provision is extensive with a plethora of clubs and trips, underpinned by the House system which encourages all students to get involved in a myriad of competitions from Drama and Music to Public Speaking. This programme also allows for the development of flexible curriculum provision. Year 9 and 10 students, for example, have been offered the opportunity to study at AS level Creative Writing. The enrichment programme is appreciated both by parents who commented they “never see their child after school” and by the students who said they were “spoilt for choice” and complained lunchtime was “too short”.
- A wealth of external links to local and national businesses and universities equally ensures the school is able to foster and support the aspirations of individual students, especially those considered Exceptionally Able. This has led to success in national competitions for several school students.
- The school have ensured the views of the students are actively sought and acted on to strengthen provision. The students were completely confident that if they had an issue it would be addressed. This included the head girl commenting she “didn't really like the term AGT because it sounded elitist” and then pondering whether they could consider another term and being happy to consider discussing this with the Senior Leadership Team. All the students interviewed were eloquent, confident, open and accepting of being recognised as able learners. They spoke of it being “a great feeling” to be identified and that the teachers “were proud of them” and that made them “want to do more” and “it was good to be rewarded”. Equally they felt accepted by their peers, saying “they congratulate us” but acknowledging the whole programme is very inclusive.
- Parents feel well supported and informed, commenting that “everyone is considered special” and that the school “notices the students”; “sets the bar high” so they “thrive on challenge” but that being identified as made their child “more confident and motivated”. They were clear that if they had any concern the “open door” policy at the school would ensure it was dealt with swiftly.
- Governors are clearly informed about the work of able learners through a range of systems which ensure they have an accurate understanding of the action being taken and its impact on provision.

#### **Where teaching and learning is good or better**

- Lessons are well planned against learning outcomes which are continually shared and referred to enabling students to move forward.
- Staff make it clear from the outset that their aspirations for the class are high, for example in a Year 11 Science lesson the teacher admitted “This is insanely difficult” and “You have to be thinking of good questions to ask.”
- Student behaviour is exemplary and conducive to developing learning; they are engaged in lessons, enthusiastic and keen to share ideas. The staff clearly have good relationships with them and often tackle problems with humour and a sense of fun.
- Skilful higher order questioning is used to deepen understanding, with staff carefully selecting individual students to respond, as well as providing open forums for reflection. Careful scaffolding is used to extend learning and ensure students are encouraged to develop their own learning and attain the highest grades possible.
- Students are encouraged to work together either in pairs or groups to challenge learning, with able learners often being assigned differing roles as group leaders, coaches or mentors, for example in a Year 11 English lesson students challenged each other to find the best quotes to support key ideas. The exceptionally able are challenged to act as peer tutors.

- Students are articulate and able to use a good range of subject specific and technical language effectively, for example in Year 8 English commenting “Miss there is a ton of personification in this poem” equally they are happy to reflect on potential targets and levels working together to assess their learning against level descriptors which at key stage 3 still included GCSE working levels.
- Staff ensured there were good links to prior learning and real life opportunities.
- Marking is purposeful – focussing on what had gone well and next steps. Students were involved in the marking process – peer marking was used effectively in Biology and where work had been marked they students were expected to reflect on the comments and respond with their own views.

**Summary of Areas for Development:**

**Portfolio scrutiny, interview and work samples**

- Expand the close analysis of data on the cohort –drilling down to ensure that all those with potential to progress either from entry to the school or Key Stage 2 do progress to A/A\*.
- Further develop the breadth of identification by considering Non-Verbal scores (CAT or other tests) to ensure that students whose verbal abilities may mask their potential are identified
- Enhance IAG advice for AGT students by developing awareness of different post 18 pathways earlier, starting with Key Stage 3 (Year 9) students.....and then
- Support and develop parental knowledge of HEI pathways.
- Support the new GATCo with appropriate training.
- Further development of the growing VLE to support the identified cohort and their parents.

**Teaching and learning**

- Ensure the range of marking being developed by staff/departments is consistently used across all subjects to support the progression of able students, sharing the best practice observed in the school.
- Continue to develop practice and continuity of provision through sharing best practice as outlined in the Teaching and Learning policy.
- To ensure students without English as a first language are not disadvantaged by not understanding academic language and subject specific terminology, building on the good practice already started in some departments.

<b>Date award achieved:</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> October 2014</b>	<b>Assessors:</b>	<b>Lead = Linda Prestidge Shadow = Renata Joseph</b>
<b>Re-accreditation date:</b>	<b>October 2018</b>	<b>Signatures:</b>	