

## ALCESTER ACADEMY

Alcester Academy is a highly successful 11-16 school with 610 students currently on roll. Alcester is located between Studley and Stratford-Upon-Avon. The school has an excellent reputation based on examination results, a progressive approach to educational development and a strong sense of community. At our last inspection, Ofsted judged us good with a view to returning very soon in order to re-assess this decision towards an outstanding judgement. The schools' overall Progress 8 score for 2019 was 0.77, which once again places us as one of the top performing non selective schools in Warwickshire, and in the top 5% nationally.

However this has not always been the picture at Alcester Academy. Results prior to 2018 nowhere near as impressive and staff knew action had to be taken. The class of 2018/19 were a group with a considerable number of students who had not started in year 7, and academically, were not in line with their peers. In addition to this, this year group were the last year of old SATs system and therefore did not have the same preparation and grounding that current SATs provide.

The school made the decision that to wait until the end of year 10 to take mock exams, would be too late for this year group. Earlier identification of knowledge gaps were essential to ensure each student reached their full potential. Following on from this, the medium term plans in all areas were modified in response to the results from these mocks. This also enabled the school to make changes



to set groups, to create smaller intervention groups where teaching and learning was specifically targeted to improving key skills. We firmly believe that the timing of this was instrumental in closing gaps and ensuring pupils had the right mind-set whilst they were in year 10 and not the usual and sometimes delayed reactive response in year 11. As a strategy, we firmly believe in this, which is why continues to be ongoing practice for all of our year 10s.

Another strategy employed, was the formation of English, maths and science tutor groups in year 11. While these were created using data from teacher assessments, the main benefit was the opportunity for pupils to work with different teachers. It is our strong belief that it is not the amount of time students spend in core subjects, before during or after school, but the access to a different teacher, a different voice and a different teaching style. This was also facilitated in the after school, Saturday and holiday provision on offer from October half term. This took place for every subject area.





A factor that needed to be considered in this 2018/19 cohort was the higher than usual Pupil Premium number of students. The figure of 27% was 10% higher than previous year groups. Attendance was a huge focus for these students and through successful building of home-school relationships, teachers mentoring students and an insistence that every student was expected to attend every opportunity offered, whether that was a revision session or a trip to the theatre. If necessary, students were collected and returned home, anything to ensure they accessed everything that other students did. This resulted in 92.3% of this PP cohort gaining a grade four and above in both English and maths. Overall Alcester Academy PP students achieved almost a grade higher than their counterparts nationally.

Staff worked very hard to get to know each individual student and their parents. This helped to understand home circumstances and the support around each child. This knowledge built as early on as Year 5 and into Year 6 transition for many students and then continued into Year 11. Students were provided with bespoke support according to



need whether this was a loan of a laptop, or a drive towards getting a student a well needed EHCP to identify their needs in more detail. We refined our system for identifying exam access arrangements in order that students built a greater confidence during the exam season.

Our school believes that students' memories of year 11 should not solely focus on exam preparation, the experiences and enrichment they are exposed to during this period should remain with them for a long time. Many of our students were interested in music and drama, and we felt that they should not be denied the opportunity to be involved in these extra-curricular learning opportunities. Rather than serve as a distraction or another burden upon these students it helped them to manage their time and organised themselves as well as forge collaborative relationships with their peers and their teachers.

