

The NACE Challenge Award: Assessor's Report
Forest Gate Community School

Summary of Strengths:

Portfolio Scrutiny, Interview and work samples

- Forest Gate was judged as being an outstanding school by Ofsted in February 2016 and designated as the best performing school in the local authority in September 2016.
- The school demonstrates high ambition and aspiration for all students, including the more able and talented. The headteacher, governors and the extended leadership team, of which the more able students (MAS) leader is a member, have created an environment in which staff and students can have high expectations of themselves and of one another.
- The highly skilled and enthusiastic lead, together with a very strong team approach, ensures that all staff are fully committed to raising achievement for more able and talented students. The achievement of all students is on an upward trajectory. Value added measures are significantly above the national average and standards, including those for MAS, are, in most subjects, above the national average. There are minimal gaps between groups of students, including those that are disadvantaged, and these are showing signs of closing.
- The school's 'Pathway A' policy is part of a cycle of continual review and reflects the school's provision for more able learners and those identified as having gifts and talents. The entire staff has contributed to the development of the policy, including through the development of excellent subject-specific criteria and provision statements.
- The progress of more able and talented students is meticulously tracked through the 'Dynamic Progress Report' (DPR) and through regular contact with the lead practitioner. Individual needs are responded to in a timely manner to ensure that any underachievement is addressed quickly and effectively.
- The DPR has increased students' responsibility for their own progress, as well as teacher response and enhanced parental involvement. All stakeholders speak enthusiastically about how DPR has impacted on individual progress. As one parent said, 'My son is excelling: the communication between teacher, parent and child is enhanced through the 'Dynamic Progress Report'. The students are hungry for success.' A MAS student told us, 'If I am not happy with my progress in a particular lesson I can email my teacher who will provide feedback – this system has drastically improved my standards.'
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and high expectations ensure that students are thoroughly engaged in their learning. There is an overt focus on enabling students to develop 'depth and understanding' in all their subjects.
- There is an extremely positive climate for learning where teachers and students have very good relationships, conducive to good learning and hard work. They demonstrate a thirst for knowledge and innovation which are generated as values in their own right.
- All staff, including non-teaching staff, receive excellent professional development to provide for more able and talented students in the classroom, as demonstrated in the outstanding provision observed in lessons. Provision for more able and talented students is a regular agenda item on staff training sessions, faculty and leadership team meetings; weekly CPD sessions give staff an opportunity to share good practice.
- The curriculum is carefully planned. There are no glass ceilings to hinder achievement. Students of differing abilities follow different 'Pathways', all of which ensure a broad education. Exceptionally able students are particularly well catered for. 'Pathway X', for the exceptionally able, allows them to take GCSE in mathematics as early as Year 8 and 'A' level in Year 11. In addition, there is a wide range of opportunity for students to take part in clubs and enrichment activities in which students develop their talents to a high level.

- Students' views and responses are listened to and valued, including their views on how they learn best. They spoke highly of the way they are supported and challenged in lessons.
- Raising aspirations is of the highest priority. Students are exposed to many opportunities to enrich their learning and to widen their experience of higher education. The 'Prestigious Colleges Programme' is successful in enabling some of the most able students to access sixth form provision in eminent establishments. Through 'The Brilliant Club', Year 7 MAS have had the opportunity to visit Russell Group universities. Students talked enthusiastically about the impact of the range of mentoring support they have access to, including that provided by a City law firm for Year 9 students.
- The school recognises that for students to be successful in their lives they need to be equipped with good academic achievement and also skills that will 'level the playing field' in the work place. The newly introduced 'Master Mission' scheme is beginning to help students develop essential skills such as resilience, curiosity and community spirit. Additionally, there are a wide range of positions of responsibility which students can apply for, so as to make a visible contribution within the school community.
- Driven by the enthusiasm of the Chair, governors provide good support and challenge. Parents feel that the school is open, welcoming and highly inclusive in meeting the needs of all pupils. They appreciate the wealth of opportunities the school provides and the impact that has on their children. As one parent said, 'The teachers do not give up on the students, they have very high expectations. I am so happy - this is definitely the right school for my son.'

Where Teaching and Learning is good or better

Sessions were observed in Years 7-10 in a range of subjects including English, history, science, geography and music. The quality of provision was outstanding and consistently demonstrated:

- High expectations,
- Engaging, challenging and varied differentiation of activities which promoted learning in depth
- Innovative approaches to learning such as the use of 'flipped learning' to encourage metacognition and independent study,
- Questioning which challenged and probed pupils' thinking,
- Using learners as 'experts',
- Effective use of group work and paired talk in which pupils had specific roles,
- Well-planned and imaginatively-used resources including ICT,
- An extremely positive environment for learning which clarified the intrinsic purposes of the knowledge conveyed,
- A consistent marking and feedback policy which supports the students in making progress in their learning,
- Encouraging pupil enquiry to extend their learning and understanding.

Summary of Areas for Development:

Achievement and Teaching and Learning

- Continue to increase the proportion of students achieving A* and A so that all subjects achieve levels of high attainment, such as are demonstrated in English and mathematics.
- Work to extend opportunities for critical thinking and debate, thus furthering students' skills in presentation, interaction and feedback.

Provision and Partnerships

- For the leadership of the school to have in place a system of succession planning to ensure that the high-quality leadership of more able provision is sustained over time.
- Revise the definition of 'exceptional ability', so that it relates to nationally recognised standards.
- Explore ways to increase the involvement of governors with the provision for more able students and continue to develop ways to collaborate with other schools and relevant institutions.

Date Award Achieved	29.11.16	Assessor	Barbara Firth (Lead) John Broadbent
Date of reassessment	November 2020	Signature of Lead Assessor	