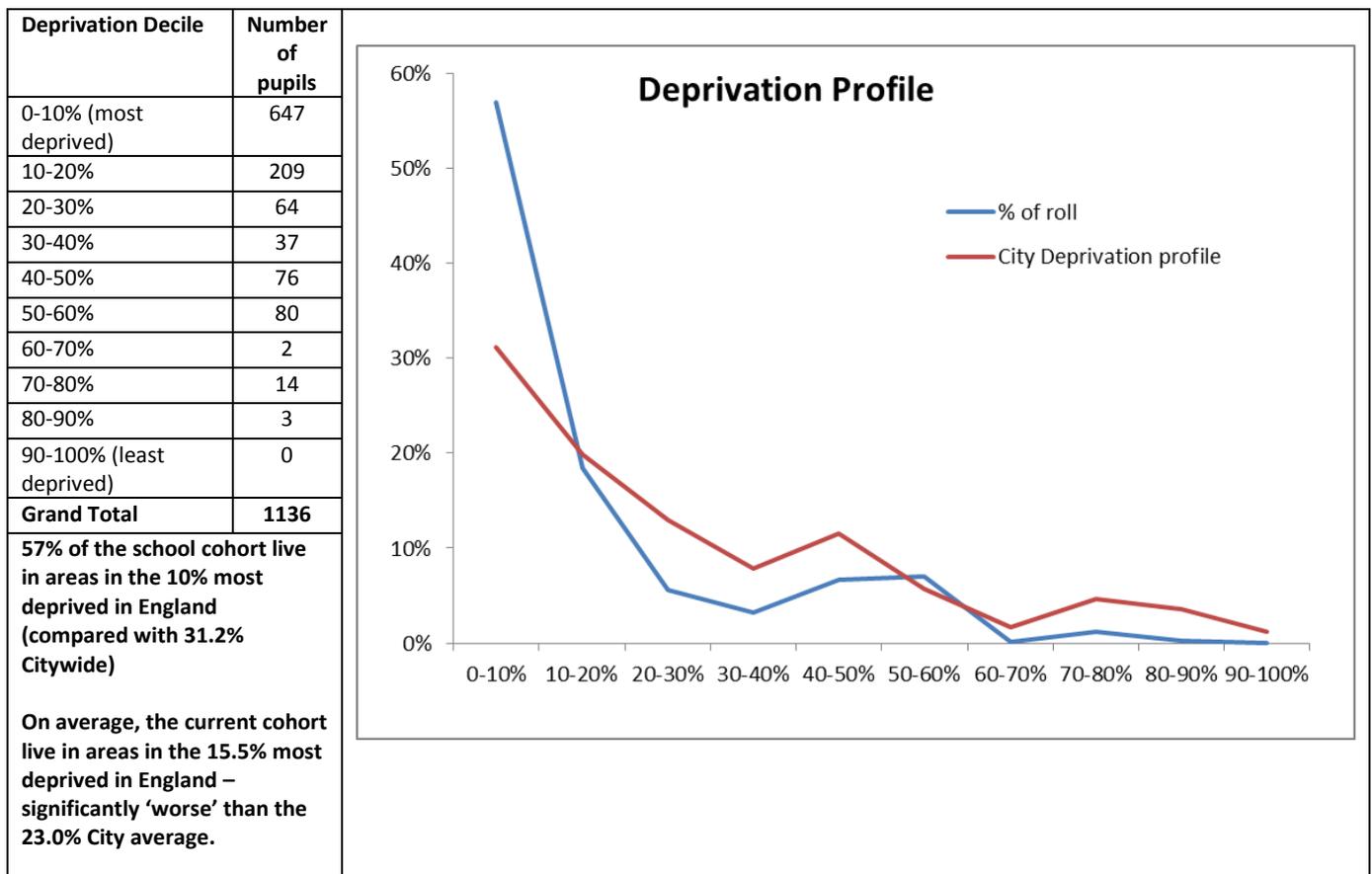


**Position Statement and Characteristics** of the Discovery Academy

The Academy is part of the College Academies Trust, a Multi Academies Trust sponsored by Stoke-on-Trent College. The Discovery Academy was created in 2011 from the merger of two predecessor schools, Edensor Technology College and Mitchell High School. The Academy relocated to a new purpose built school in September 2013. It is a larger than average 11-16 academy situated in the Bentilee area of Stoke-on-Trent, an area of very high deprivation and unemployment with an IDACI rank of 511 (See below).

**Current Academy Cohort by Deprivation Characteristic**



Whilst the vast majority of students are from white British families, there is still a significant number from ethnic minority backgrounds although this number has steadily reduced since the move to the new site in September 2013. The ability level on entry is significantly below average and the proportion of students eligible for Pupil Premium has risen steadily to 59%, well above the national average of 28.5%. Over 15% of students have a special educational need (SEN), statement EHC plan or are SEN support.

Significant restructuring of staff has taken place since 2011 and during the period from September 2013 – July 2015 a number of weaker staff have left the Academy to be replaced by Good and Outstanding teachers – significantly improving the standard of teaching across the Academy. The introduction of the new Behaviour for Learning system, and the introduction of a revised curriculum and an extensive CPD programme raised standards considerably, and reports from external consultants and DfE advisers, has confirmed the transformation in culture and ethos. These improvements have been highlighted most recently in the HMI monitoring inspection (July 2016), the DfE visit (Jan 2016) and an external review by the George Spencer Trust (April 2016).

The Principal took up position in January 2016 with a proven track record in Senior Leadership by helping move a school to good from special measures in less than two years. Other additions complemented a renewed SLT team and include a new Vice Principal (Maths) and an Assistant Principal (English) who both led outstanding Maths and English strategies at their previous schools. The new SLT team are supported by a Group Chief Executive that operates across the College Academies Trust and the impact of the work by the leadership team continues to be monitored closely by a Governors' Executive Board, which meets every 2 weeks to hold senior and middle leaders to account.

**Figure 1. Basic Characteristics of Discovery**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Discovery</b>	<b>Comparison</b>
Number on Roll	957	1030	Above Average
% free school meal eligibility	28.5%	31%	Above average
% students from minority ethnic groups	25.6%	12.9%	Below average
% students with first language not English	14.4%	8.5%	Below average
Deprivation indicator	0.22	0.39	Well above average
Average point score KS2	27.9	26.7	Below average

**“The capacity of the leadership team has been significantly increased by the January appointments and senior leaders confidently articulate an understanding of the school’s current position”**  
*HMI monitoring inspection May 2016*

Leadership since 2014 has significantly increased the level of expectation and ambition required from all stakeholders within the Academy. The relentless focus to raise standards, supported by effective processes has driven a strong 3 year improvement trend. The Trust and the Principal has 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 is not yet outstanding because we need to:**

- Secure substantial improvement in progress for disadvantaged students
- Ensure the effective deployment of staff and resources including the Pupil Premium and SEN funding to secure excellent outcomes for students
- Develop closer links with parents and use their views, along with those of students and staff to gain a deep, accurate understanding of the Academy’s effectiveness
- Develop outstanding Teaching and Learning where all staff are deeply involved in their own professional development

### **Governance of the Academy**

The Academy is part of the College Academies Trust which has established a Trust Board and local governing bodies. The Chair of the Discovery Academy local governing body is a Director of the Trust Board. The Trust commissioned reviews of Pupil Premium and a Review of Governance in 2015/2016. The Governors are ambitious for all students and have a strong strategic vision for the Academy. They understand the role and bring a wide range of high-level skills and expertise, undertaking regular training to ensure their ability to fulfil the role. Governors visit the Academy regularly conducting learning walks, Governors’ Executive Board meetings and holding leaders to account. Governors are confident in analysing the detailed data available and as a consequence they have a clear understanding of the Academy’s strengths and weaknesses. HMI monitoring inspections have evaluated overall that “governors are highly professional and skilled in holding academy leaders to account” *Ofsted Inspection January 2015*

### **Leadership team**

The Principal and Senior Leadership Team have a clear understanding of the issues at the Academy and have implemented strong and effective systems to monitor performance, improve outcomes and create a calm and orderly community to support effective teaching and learning. HMI monitoring inspections and external reviews from outstanding Trusts validate leadership judgments that teaching, personal development behaviour and welfare, and leadership are good. Outcomes are showing clear improvement as evidenced by the summer 2016 results.

There has been a major CPD focus over the past 18 months on developing all leaders at every level. In addition a number of staff are currently engaged in or have completed the NPQML and Future Leaders programmes. The Middle Leadership Team has been strengthened by appointments of a new Head of Maths (September 2015) and Head of English (September 2016).

## **Teaching**

DFE and HMI reports have consistently reported on the rapid improvement in the quality of teaching. Performance management is used with effect and linked to a set of 'non-negotiables', which is supported by an extensive programme of personalised CPD highly valued by staff. Teaching staff have developed a growth mindset and are always seeking ways to improve their practice and share good practice.

## **Curriculum and Information Advice & Guidance**

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.

Good partnership arrangements with the local colleges - particularly the Trust Sponsor Stoke-on-Trent College - have had a positive impact on students attending college based courses. In addition the integration of the Studio Colleges offering vocational pathways in Construction and Engineering provides the Academy students with a broad range of options at Key Stage. 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

The Academy focuses heavily on the key values of Pride and Respect and this is reinforced regularly and links closely to fundamental British values. The PSHE programme is detailed and well planned, successfully linking a daily tutorial session, subject lessons and academy assembly programme. The recent Ofsted report suggested that this "successfully fosters good relations and makes sure that any discrimination is robustly tackled". Students understand bullying and feel that "incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff" (Ofsted 2015). Students feel safe and secure in the Academy and "issues such as keeping themselves safe online, cyber-bullying, extremism and radicalisation are discussed in detail in assemblies, form time and lessons" *Ofsted Inspection 2015*

## **Behaviour and Attendance**

The Behaviour for Learning Strategy has raised standards of behaviour significantly to the point where the Academy is a calm and orderly environment, students dress smartly and are polite and helpful. Students behave well and have good attitudes to learning so that low level disruption in lessons is rare. All students take care and pride in the Academy and behave sensibly, ensuring a calm and orderly environment, and students feel safe and secure in the Academy. Changes implemented since the Ofsted inspection have resulted in significant improvements in attendance which is now above the City average. Recent changes have also addressed the percentage of students classed as 'persistent absentees' which is reducing rapidly towards the national average of 6.5%.

## **Parental engagement**

The Discovery Parent Voice has been a focus for improvement and in January 2016 the Academy launched a parent forum that meets regularly to discuss key issues. From this the Academy has developed a clear strategy for improving parental communication and involvement. In March 2016 the Academy introduced evening sessions to support parents helping their child with revision that supported all year groups taking end of year exams.

## **Safeguarding**

Comprehensive checks are carried out to ensure that the Academy's arrangements for safeguarding are robust. Arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory arrangements.

**“The work being undertaken to strengthen and enhance the quality of teaching and learning across the Academy is impressive” DFE visit January 2016**

## Summary

Teaching is now judged as ‘good’ as classroom typicality has consistently improved, demonstrating a good or better profile over the last 12 months. Rapid improvements that have been made to teaching through a systematic approach, where clear non negotiables are embedded by staff. A higher expectation on what students can achieve and effective assessment of learning informs effective teacher planning. An awareness of Pupil Premium and vulnerable students allows for targeted in –class intervention, which is supporting better attainment and progress. Teaching now confidently supports students to make improvements to their work and uses techniques to actively sustain interest whilst deepening knowledge.

**Quality of Teaching is not yet outstanding because teachers need to demonstrate:**

- Enhanced knowledge and deep understanding of the subjects they teach, in order that they may stretch and challenge students further
- Use ‘language for learning’ (growth mindset) which guides and motivates students to become resilient to failure in order for them to thrive in lessons and excel
- That homework deepens understanding

Ofsted have consistently highlighted the robust manner in which teaching performance is checked. It recognised that academy leaders triangulate classroom performance, assessment and student progress over time in order to judge teaching. Regular CPD development for staff is personalised to support staff at different career stages and ‘Approaches to Teaching and Learning’ support document details, changes, challenges and expectations within the classroom.

In October 2015 and March 2016 every faculty was reviewed by either an SLE or Ofsted Inspector. The outcome of these reviews evaluated a more consistent picture in the quality of teaching, particularly Maths. Where development areas remain, faculty action plans have been updated with actions supported by specialist SLE’s and follow up reviews scheduled. The George Spencer Academy conducted a whole academy review / health check in March 2016 and confirmed rapid, secure progress had been made against recommended actions and the overall picture of Teaching and Learning across the Academy. The report stated “Teaching and Learning at the Discovery Academy are characterised by an achievement culture focused on high aspiration” and this was supported by 80% of observations (validating internal monitoring) that showed good or better learning over time. Additionally “teachers’ awareness of the needs of Pupil Premium students leads to planning and delivery that supports them well.” Indeed during the review at least 20% of lessons observed evidenced outstanding learning.

Launched in February 2016, was the approaches of Carol Dweck’s Growth Mindset for both staff and students. Supporting the Academy’s vision to ‘Expect Excellence’, the language for learning changed in relation to student ‘mindset’ and attitude to learning, not only within the classroom but across the whole academy. Equally, for staff, CPD has focused on ‘Language for Learning’ to encourage engagement, motivation and resilience. In addition, an external Learning and Development Consultant has been commissioned to work closely with all our staff to develop further and enhance active learning in a growth mindset culture. “The impact of this is not only visible in school displays and signage but evident in the attitude of senior leaders and governors, in classroom activities and discussions with pupils.” *HMI Inspection May 2016*

In light of curriculum changes, subjects have also followed a programme to enhance subject knowledge, in order to create a culture of high expectation and challenge. The programme is structured into a precise timeline of CPD which allows subjects to analyse, deconstruct and formulate new curriculum maps, assessment criteria in line with the new 1-9 levelling system and design new schemes of work. Inset has been delivered by primary specialists and liaison with A Level providers to detail the enhancement of KS2 expectations and further education requirements, so that this is a consideration and is implemented into new maps and schemes of work. Expertise within the Senior Leadership Team in all core subjects allows effective support and challenge in order to deliver the highest levels of subject knowledge.

Literacy is a successful continued focus of the Academy and is embedded well into our 'non-negotiable' expectations. Literacy marking features significantly in our marking policy and is executed thoroughly by all staff, across all subjects. 'Marking continues to be strengths of the school's work' HMI June 2016. Students join the Academy with very low literacy skills and reading ages well below their chronological age. The Academy has well devised reading strategies which develop the reading abilities of all types of readers. Students read often and have daily form time reading opportunities. As a result of regular and targeted literacy interventions, students are quickly improving their reading ability, with many students now reading at chronological age and above, in both KS3 and 4. The success of Literacy is a result of not only the passion and determination of our Literacy Co-ordinator, Extended Learning Team, but also the staff who believe in its importance.

Numeracy across the curriculum is also a continued priority for whole school and features firmly as a 'non-negotiable' expectation. In addition, the Numeracy co-ordinator is quickly changing attitudes, with support and training to raise the profile and importance of Numeracy, which is raising standards in Maths. An intensive mapping of numeracy within other curriculum areas, has resulted in number of strategies beginning to be embedded across school from regular form time activities, 'Meet, Greet, Think' starters, subject numeracy guides to ensure consistency of approach and common logo to highlight Numeracy in all subjects. 'Departments are aware of the role they play in improving pupils' confidence in numeracy.' HMI June.

Homework is regularly set and is now embedded into the learning journey in line with the homework policy, which outlines the Academy's high expectations. Homework is an integral part of effective Teaching and Learning supporting classroom teaching and is pivotal to developing a culture of independent learning at the Academy. "Homework is now being set on a more regular basis" *HMI Inspection May 2016*

Improvements to teaching, learning and assessment have ensured the Academy has reversed declining standards as outlined by HMI June 2016 "standards of teaching continue to improve", whilst "marking and assessment continue to be strengths of the school's work". This is demonstrated by improved progress from -0.7 (2015) to -0.2 (2016). In addition, the three year trend demonstrates a sustained consistency to the improvement of the teaching and learning across the Academy from 45% good or better (2014) to 73% (2015). Indeed, current achievement analysis combined with lesson observation and work scrutiny triangulates that over 80% of teaching is now good or better.

“Staff and pupils were very positive about the improvements in behaviour seen over recent months. A new behaviour management system is in place and pupils value the emphasis on rewards for good behaviour. Pupils take pride in their work and appearance” *HMI monitoring visit November 2015*

## Summary

Student personal development, behaviour and welfare is good, there have been no permanent exclusions since the 2011-2012 academic year and fixed term exclusions are reducing year on year. The 2015 Ofsted report, subsequent HMI monitoring and DFE visits have recognised the positive impact of the pastoral systems. There is in evidence a higher standard and expectation of behaviour at the Academy. The students move around the Academy in an orderly and calm manner which has been developed by a ‘Pride and Respect’ ethos. The students behave well in lessons and show a good level of engagement with an ownership of their own learning. The students are confident, self-assured and take pride in their work, uniform and environment.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is not yet outstanding because:

- There are a small number of students that do not value their education and therefore are persistent absentees
- Student conduct is not yet impeccable

The four year trend data for all aspects of personal development, behaviour and welfare can be found below. This data shows the significant improvements made.

All data is based on % of cohort	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
<b>Attendance</b>	<b>89.8</b>	<b>92.7</b>	<b>94.0</b>	<b>94.5</b>
Local Average	92.8	94.1	94.0	94.0
National Average	94.2	94.9	94.7	94.7
<b>Persistent Absence</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>7.6</b>
Local Average	9.7	7.2	7.2	7.2
National Average	6.5	5.3	5.3	5.3
<b>Fixed Term Exclusions</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>7.3</b>
Local Average	10.3	10.3	10.6	10.6
National Average	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8
<b>Permanent Exclusions</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Local Average	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22
National Average	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12

Discovery students show respect for the Behaviour for Learning system that tracks both conduct and quality of work in every lesson. This is underpinned by growth mindset and an updated Behaviour for Learning policy has been launched for the 2016-2017 academic year. Every student receives individual feedback about their lesson performance, which produces rewards and sanction information. Staff set the tone for a high standard of behaviour by ensuring that the small things are consistently attended to e.g. shirts tucked in, adherence to academy uniform rules etc. This is supported by a ‘meet and greet’ policy so that students enter classrooms prepared for learning.

Consistency is the key and frequent checks are made on corridors and in lessons to ensure that all staff are rigorously enforcing the behaviour policy. Senior staff are assigned a day to patrol, and departments support the system through a tiered approach to both sanction and reward. This has become part of academy life so that the more severe behaviour issues are dealt with extremely seriously and, as a result, are very rare indeed.

Attendance is now above the City average but is slightly below the national average. Significant improvements have been made with the introduction of an Attendance Team, including a College Academies Trust Education Welfare Officer. There is a rigorous system of attendance tracking and an extensive reward system to incentivise good attendance, as a result we are above the local average for the first time. Persistent absence has remained an issue and is above the national average although this does show a significantly improving trend. There is a good foundation on which to build upon to get attendance and persistent absence to national benchmarks by the end of the 2016-2017 academic year. Attendance gaps between students eligible for Pupil Premium and those that aren't are at 2.5%, there is a significant closing of the gap.

Student's safety in the Academy is good. Students say they feel safe and know who to talk to if they don't. The DASH (Discovery Academy Safeguarding Hub) service has enabled students to access high quality advice and guidance on safety and safeguarding issues, and these are rectified or actioned immediately. Incidents of bullying are very low and students say this is dealt with efficiently and effectively. The curriculum, assemblies and form times are used to teach students how to stay safe. Areas such as cyberbullying / e-safety, extremism and radicalisation, and sexual exploitation are discussed with students regularly in line with the Academy's work on '360° Safe'.

The establishment of a strong and robust student leadership is in place which enables our vision of growth mindset and expecting excellence for all. A new Student Council involving over 40 students has been elected with representatives from all year groups. They are now active in meetings with key decision makers across the Academy and immediate improvements have been made. Action Teams for further improvement projects have been set up to develop future priorities, this includes working with our local community to foster a closer relationship. A newly elected Prefect Team has also raised the profile of student leadership across the Academy, and is helping to raise standards and embed a community ethos.

**“Teachers make use of a range of strategies and activities to support disadvantaged pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are making more rapid progress than others in the school in English and mathematics, and catching up with their classmates” HMI monitoring inspection May 2016**

Outcomes are judged as requires improvement. In 2016, significant improvements have been made across a range of progress and attainment measures. Progress 8 has shown a significant improvement with all groups of learners including PP and SEN with a statement showing improving progress from 2015. The expected progress gaps in Maths and English both narrowed in 2016. From all starting points the expected and more than expected progress in Maths improved for both disadvantaged and ‘other’ students. Although progress in Maths is improving, expected progress and more than expected progress is not yet at national. Progress in English from all starting points remain close to or above national. Value added scores were close to national in English, Science and Maths, significantly above national in Languages and significantly below national in Humanities. English Baccalaureate showed good improvement to 8.4%. With new leadership and the recruitment of specialist teachers, Maths has seen significant improvement in progress and attainment of students across the range of abilities. Students performed well above national average for the cohort in Languages, Art, Expressive Arts, Psychology, PE BTEC, Science, IT, and Health and Social Care. Progress in other year groups across a range of subjects including English and Maths shows a pattern of students meeting challenging targets. The Academy remains committed to improving literacy skills and reading ages. Students reading at chronological age has risen in each year group by around 30%.

#### Outcomes are not yet good because:

- Expected progress and more than expected progress in Maths is rising but not yet at national

#### Standards of Attainment & Progress

Despite cohort 2016’s attainment on entry being significantly below national and weaker than the previous cohort, performance across a range of progress and attainment measures showed good improvement.

Progress 8 showed significant improvement in 2016 at -0.2, compared to -0.8 for 2015, this is despite the curriculum not being designed around EBacc selection. Projections show a continued improvement in 2017 to 0. All groups of learners including Pupil Premium and SEN with a statement showed improved Progress 8 scores from 2015. With a much weaker cohort in 2106 Attainment 8 actually improved to 4.0 from 3.8. The average points score across all groups is close to or at the corresponding national average for the cohort.

Value added measures show that students’ progress in Languages is significantly above national at 1004, with Science and English remaining close to the median nationally. However, the value added in Humanities remained significantly below 1000. With a new teaching team in place for Humanities from September 2017, results are expected to improve rapidly. Significant improvements in the value added for Maths is a result of improved progress and attainment across a range of abilities.

The expected progress gaps in Maths and English both closed in 2016; Maths closed from 22% to 9% and English closed from 18% to 8%. Although the more than expected progress gap in Maths has widened, this is due to an improved performance from disadvantaged students but a more rapid improvement from non-disadvantaged students. At all starting points the percentage of students making expected and more than expected progress in Maths has improved for both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students in 2016. The percentages of high ability students making expected and more than expected progress in English improved in 2016. From all starting points the percentage of students making expected or more than expected progress in English remains close to or above national figures. Expected progress for middle and high ability students in Maths is improving over time but is not yet at national. However, projections show that expected progress in Maths from all starting points will be at or above national average in 2017. Overall progress in other year groups across a range of subjects, including English and Maths, shows a pattern of students meeting challenging targets.

Maths has seen a significant improvement in progress and attainment of students across the range of abilities in 2016. This is due to a change in leadership, recruitment of specialist teachers, and focussed interventions. Significant improvements at A\*-A from 4% to 9.1%, 3 levels of progress from 47% to 58%, 4 levels of progress from 7% to 19%, and a value added score improving from 996 (bottom 5% nationally) to 999 (around median). Further rapid improvement is expected for 2017.

The percentage of students achieving A\*-C in English and Maths in 2016 has increased slightly to 48%, despite a weaker cohort than 2015. The percentage of students achieving A\*-C in English decreased from 63% in 2015 to 55%, and Maths remains stable. EBacc showed significant improvement from 2% in 2015 to 8.4% in 2016. Students performed well above national average for the cohort in Languages, Art, Expressive Arts, Psychology, PE BTEC, Science, IT and Health and Social Care.

In 2016 Pupil Premium students made an improvement on the previous year for 5A\*-C and an 11% improvement over the last 2 years. The gap for 3 levels of progress narrowed considerably in Maths from 23% in 2015 to 11% in 2016. Progress 8 between groups of students showed a Progress 8 score of -0.4 for Pupil Premium students improved from -1.1 last year. This compares to a non Pupil Premium Progress 8 score of 0. This is a significant improvement on last year's results closing the gap between Pupil Premium and non Pupil Premium from -0.7 to -0.4.

The progress of statemented students SEN improved in 2016. An increased percentage of statemented students made expected progress in English and Maths. In English 80% of statemented students made expected progress compared with 60% in 2015. In Maths 60% made expected progress in 2015 compared to 20% in 2015 and 0% in 2014. Progress 8 has improved from -1 to -0.3.

Students join the Academy with very low literacy skills and reading ages well below their chronological age. The Academy has a well devised reading strategy which develops the reading abilities of all types of readers. Students read often, having daily form time reading opportunities as well as reading sessions every week as part of the curriculum. Both teachers and support staff are determined and enthusiastic about improving the reading abilities of students. This was evident on a recent consultancy for Literacy from Phil Beadle, who commented that 'I have not seen an institution that is more serious about moving literacy forwards for their students'. Academy records show that as a result of intensive literacy interventions students are quickly improving their reading ability. Students told Inspectors they enjoy reading and are now more willing to read. Students reading at chronological age has risen in each year group by around 30%. More specific focussed intervention takes place for the 40% of each year group whose reading abilities are still being developed, which is showing significant impact termly.

Summary

As a result of the decisive action taken by the Trust and the Leadership Team to address the areas identified in the January 2015 Section 5 inspection, significant improvements have been made in all areas of the Ofsted framework. The evidence from recent HMI and DFE visits supports the Academy’s own rigorous self-evaluation and consequently the Academy clearly no longer requires ‘Serious Weaknesses’.

In its self-evaluation the Academy’s key judgements are good with the exception of outcomes Graded 3. The Inspection Handbook is clear that Inspectors will give most weight to pupils’ progress and the improvement trends in a range of progress and attainment measures. Senior Leaders have clearly identified why outcomes are not yet good and secure evidence from judgements in teaching and learning, in-year attainment / progress measures and the projections for the new Year 11 cohort, which indicates that the Academy is swiftly improving towards grade 2 in this area.

When judging overall effectiveness as Grade 2 the Inspection Handbook specifies that all judgements are likely to be good or better, but that in exceptional circumstances may require improvement in one of the key areas.

**\* Due to the exceptional circumstances the Academy Leaders have faced in overcoming legacy issues, the rapid improvement in other key judgements, and the positive improvement trends in outcomes, it is possible that at inspection the Academy could be graded as good for overall effectiveness. Senior Leaders are optimistic that this is achievable and that the rigorous evidence collection at inspection will support this grading.**

Figure 3. Summary Judgements	
Key Aspect	Judgement
The outcomes of students at the school	Requires Improvement (3)
The quality of teaching in the school	Good (2)
The quality of leadership in and quality of management of the school	Good (2)
The behaviour and safety of students at the school	Good (2)