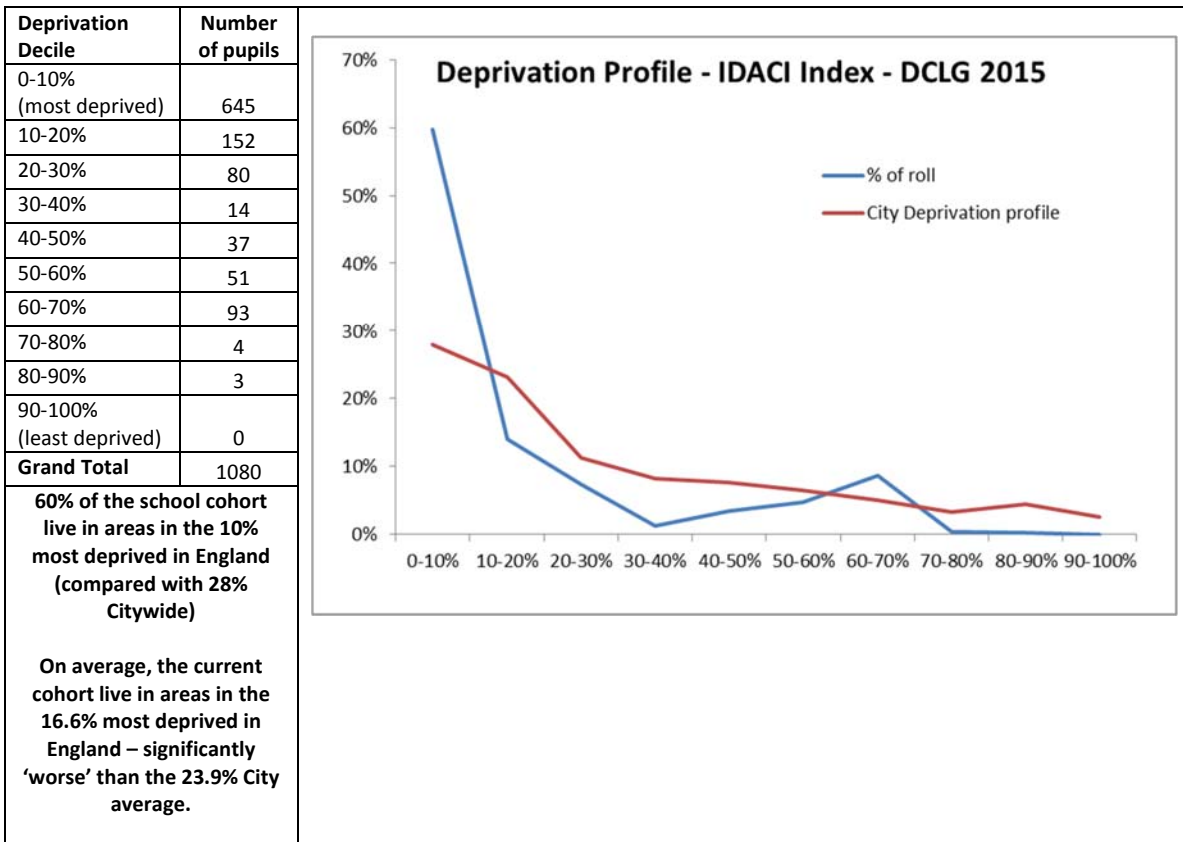


Position Statement and Characteristics of the Discovery Academy

The Academy is part of the Alpha Academies Trust, a Multi Academies Trust. 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. Bentilee is an area of very high deprivation and unemployment with an IDACI rank of 416, which puts the area in the 2% most deprived in the country.

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 (PP) has risen steadily to 57%, well above the national average of 28.5%. Over 15% of students have a special educational need (SEN), statement education health and care (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, revised curriculum and an extensive CPD programme raised standards considerably. Reports from external consultants and DfE advisers has confirmed the transformation in culture and ethos. These improvements have been highlighted most recently in the Ofsted inspection (Oct 2016), where teaching, Personal Development Behaviour and

Welfare, and leadership were all graded as good. Outcomes is set to improve as students spend more time in the improved provision.

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 Vice Principal (Maths) and an Assistant Principal (English) who both led outstanding Maths and English strategies at their previous schools. The SLT Team are supported by a Chief Executive Officer that operates across the Alpha Academies Trust (AAT) and the impact of the work by the leadership team continues to be monitored closely by a Governors' Executive Board, which meets on a regular basis to hold senior and middle leaders to account.

Figure 1. Basic Characteristics of Discovery

Characteristic	National	Discovery	Comparison
Number on Roll	957	1094	Above Average
% free school meal eligibility	28.5%	55.4%	Above average
% students from minority ethnic groups	25.6%	12.9%	Below average
% students with first language not English	14.4%	8.1%	Below average
Deprivation indicator	0.22	0.36	Well above average
Average point score KS2	27.9	27.3	Below average

“Leaders have created a positive ethos, have identified the right priorities and are tackling weaknesses robustly. As a result, the school is improving”

Ofsted inspection October 2016

Leadership 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.

Indicated by

- Ofsted 2016 evaluated leadership, learning and teaching, personal development behaviour and welfare as good
- Commissioned reviews by the Trust of Pupil Premium, Governance and Learning and Teaching validate leadership judgements and agree that the provision is good
- Outcomes achieved in 2017 place the Academy within the national average band of schools for Progress 8 and make the Academy the most improved in Stoke on Trent
- Regular Governor Executive board meetings hold leaders to account - the Ofsted inspection evaluated “governors are relentless in their drive for higher standards. Their support and challenge are effective in improving current standards” *Ofsted Inspection October 2016*
- The Principal, Senior Leadership Team and middle leadership team have a clear understanding of the issues at the Academy and have implemented strong and effective systems to monitor performance and improve outcomes
- All leaders and teachers are engaged in some form of CPD to improve their leadership and teaching - this has been supported by partnerships with external parties such as Ambitions School Leadership

A good, well balanced and meticulously planned curriculum provides students with a broad and interesting range of activities which meet their needs. All students are provided with effective information, advice and guidance on subjects to study from Year 9 onwards which is supported by a range of external stakeholders. SMSC along with British values are promoted effectively across the Academy. Partnerships with parents and the community give stakeholders a stake in how the Academy develops and is creating a positive climate in where the Academy is perceived as serving the community well. Safeguarding is a strength of the Academy.

Indicated by

- Good curriculum design has ensured that in 2017 the EBACC and attainment 8 measures were the most improved in Stoke on Trent
- NEET figures at zero / number of students continuing in education is above national average
- Ofsted 2016 reported “Students feel safe, are safe and know how to keep themselves free from danger in a range of situations, including in relation to radicalisation and extremism”
- Good attendance at ½ termly parent forum/ parent information evenings
- High % of parent’s state provision at the Academy is good or better
- Calendar of community events have received positive community feedback
- “The well-being and safety of pupils are given the highest priority.” *Ofsted 2016*

Improvement priorities:

- Secure further substantial progress for disadvantaged students
- Ensure the effective deployment of staff and resources including the Pupil Premium and SEN funding to secure excellent outcomes for all 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
- Develop a comprehensive wellbeing programme

Teaching and Learning at the Discovery Academy has an 'Expect Excellence' culture which is underpinned by a Growth Mind Set approach. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to effectively, challenge thinking and sustain interest. A thorough set of non-negotiables including active learning, differentiation and directed questioning, is evident in classrooms, ensuring that all groups of learners achieve their full potential. The Academy continues to focus on 'high levels' of stretch and challenge; increasing levels of engagement and thinking. Teachers plan for progress and create bespoke intervention plans for students who have a good attitude to learning. Teachers provide students with high quality feedback which enables them to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills because they know what they need to do to improve.

Indicated by:

- *'higher-quality learning and outcomes'* Ofsted 2016
- *'Tasks challenge pupils to deepen and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding... stretching the learning of the most-able pupils. Good quality questioning... is clearly evident.'* Ofsted 2016
- *'challenge themselves to excel'* Ofsted 2016
- *'Positive relationships between teachers and pupils foster good attitudes to learning.'* Ofsted 2016
- *'Teaching and Learning at the Discovery Academy are characterised by an achievement culture focused on high aspiration'*

The Discovery Academy has a thorough CPD programme which supports staff at all career levels; created for the teacher by the teacher. CPD is calendared and is led by a range of staff, as the Academy continues to enhance a thriving sharing culture. Faculty Leads and Lead Practitioners are instrumental in ensuring that the CPD provision within faculties is bespoke, dependent on Teaching and Learning monitoring findings, student outcome data and in-school progress data, directing the needs of the faculty or individual members of the team.

Indicated by:

- The impact of the CPD programmes has seen Improvements to teaching, learning and assessment have ensured the Academy has not only reversed declining standards significantly over the years to now have received a 'good' judgement from Ofsted (2016)
- There has been an improving trend demonstrating a sustained consistency and improvement of the teaching and learning across the Academy with a current achievement analysis combined with lesson observation and work scrutiny, triangulates that over 80% (2017) of teaching is now good or better
- Overall results for 2017 show improvement in attainment all subjects, with an overall progress 8 score of -0.1

Literacy is a successful continuing focus of the Academy and is embedded well across school. Indeed, Literacy marking features significantly in our marking policy and is executed thoroughly by all staff, across all subjects. Typically, 70% of students join the Academy with very low literacy skills (reading). Students have frequent reading opportunities and targeted literacy interventions have resulted in students quickly improving their reading ability, with many students now reading at chronological age and above, in both KS3 and 4.

Indicated by:

- *'Pupils benefit from a good range of opportunities to extend their reading and writing skills across subjects. More pupils are now making better progress as a result.'* Ofsted
- English results 4+ 70% (NA 69%) 5+ 45% (NA 25%) 6+ 25% (NA 24%) 7+ 8% (NA 9%)

Homework is embedded and regularly set to extend the learning of the classroom. There is a predetermined number of homework expected to be set by Faculties which is mostly met. In line with Faculty Policy and Practices, Faculties set challenging, age appropriate (Key Stage) homework which aims to consolidate and deepen the independent learning of the student.

Indicated by:

- Bespoke homework expectations for each Faculty
- Over 300 homework's set weekly
- 95% completion rate

Improvement Priorities:

- To further improve the accuracy of assessment using the new 1-9 grade criteria
- To improve the quality of feedback so students are more active participants in making improvements
- To ensure teaching allows more students to achieve higher grades (5+, 7+)
- To embed a study routine after lessons have finished

Leaders have actively and successfully pursued high standards of student behaviour. The students at the Discovery Academy take a pride in all aspects of their academy, including their learning, appearance and environment. The foundation for the change in culture and the raising of standards at the Academy has been through the 'Expect Excellence' ethos. Within 'Expect Excellence' the students have embraced our 'Pride and Respect' expectations which is demonstrated by good behaviours in and outside of the classroom. The 'Behaviour for Learning' system is rigorous and students receive a '1 to 4' grade for each lesson. This system is devised around growth mind-set principals and generates comprehensive student behaviour data that links to rewards and sanctions. The vast majority of students are equipped for learning and are keen to learn. The students show respect for each other and through a well-developed SMSC & PSHE programme are tolerant and open to difference. The student council is an established, independent and instrumental aspect of academy life and plays a significant role in embedding the 'Expect Excellence' ethos and driving forward academy improvement.

Indicated by:

- Permanent Exclusions are well below the national average (0.08%)
- The Academy behaviour average generated by the BFL policy shows improvement year on year
- Standards of student uniform and movement around the Academy are good
- The student council has a high profile and significant impact on academy life
- There are few instances of bullying and these are dealt with swiftly and effectively

Students at the Discovery Academy value their education and are proud to be members of our community. Attendance has improved significantly over the previous four years and the majority of students show that they enjoy attending. The attendance of students who have previously shown exceptionally high rates of absence are showing marked and sustained improvements. The implementation of a redesigned and improved pastoral team has supported the whole academy priority for improved attendance.

Indicated by:

- The overall academy attendance figure has increased from 89.8 in 2013 to 95.0% YTD which is above the local average and close to the national average
- Persistent Absence has dropped from 18.5% in 2012 to 8.5% in 2016
- Punctuality records show that there has been a sustained reduction in students being late to the Academy
- Attendance to additional lessons such as enrichment activities, intervention and tuition has been extremely high

The Academy is an orderly and a calm environment where students respond quickly to instructions from staff and peers. Low level disruption in lessons is tackled decisively and students conduct themselves well throughout the academy day, including during lesson changeovers, break times and lunchtimes. Staff have a high visibility and clear systems are in place to encourage good student movement where previously there had been evident some boisterous behaviour. Behaviour expectations are high and staff are consistent in applying and enforcing expectations. A code '7' is monitored by form tutors to ensure students are equipped each morning and there is a student led equipment shop to support this. Pastoral systems are embedded and individual faculties take responsibility for faculty level behaviour and rewards. Faculty behaviour representatives manage rewards and detentions to ensure that there is a high level of consistency.

Indicated by:

- Data shows an increase in rewards and a decrease in sanctions issued
- The behaviour average of all students has reduced from 1.90 (2015) to 1.75 (2016) (based upon BFL scores each lesson)
- Observed behaviour of students around the academy building
- A reduction of code '7's' that indicates that student equipment is better

A well planned and delivered SMSC/PSHE curriculum supports the personal development of all students. The Academy actively promotes British Values. Pastoral time, each morning supports the excellent relationships that our staff foster with students and daily assemblies tackle key issues around SMSC. Enrichment opportunities for all students are being developed and enhanced with all year 7 students undertaking an after school club.

Indicated by:

- SMSC and PSHE lessons that promote Personal Development
- Drugs, Alcohol and Sexual Health education raised through PSHE lessons and collapsed days

Franklin Scholars supports the successful integration of Year 7 students into academy life. Students are paired with Year 10 students in a mentoring relationship where they support, stretch and improve their mentee's literacy skills, boost their social skills and further develop their resilience to deal with the challenges that lie ahead. Each week students complete 1:1 coaching sessions, setting achievable targets for the week ahead. The Year 10 students gain many skills themselves such as a sense of purpose, self-worth and responsibility which help to build empathy, communication and leadership skills.

Indicated by:

- Student involvement within community projects hosted both in school and externally has risen by 80%

Improvement Priorities:

- Attendance to be at 95% by the end of the 2017-2018 academic year
- Persistent Absence to be below 15% (90% threshold)
- FTE to be below the national average (6.7%)
- Develop impeccable behaviour for learning
- Develop more extracurricular and leadership opportunities in KS3 to include the development of the Duke of Edinburgh programme

Significant improvements have been made across a range of progress and attainment measures in 2017. This is the results of improved teaching quality, a program of expert tuition and a school focus on revision and exam skills. Progress 8 is now not significantly different from national and much improved from the RI judgement in the last OFSTED inspection. Positive three year trends have been established across all DFE performance measures. Progress 8 has shown a significant improvement with all groups of learners including PP and SEN with a statement showing improving progress from 2016. English Baccalaureate has showed good year on year improvement. In 2017, students' performance improved across a range of subjects at A* to C (4+) including, Maths, English, Science, French, Psychology, IT, and Business Studies. Progress in other year groups across a range of subjects including English and Maths shows a pattern of students meeting challenging targets. Performance in the EBACC element and Open element of Progress 8 saw significant improvements this year. The Academy remains committed to improving literacy skills and reading ages which has impacted positively on student attainment.

Indicated by:

- Progress 8 was -0.12 in 2017 compared with -0.38 in 2016
- 4+ in English and Maths was 52% in 2017 compared with 47% in 2016
- EBACC was 17% in 2017 compared with 9% in 2016
- Attainment 8 was 41 in 2017 compared with 40 in 2016
- EBACC element of Progress 8 was -0.21 compared with -1.08 in 2016

Groups:

All groups of learners including Pupil Premium, SEN, male, female, low, high and middle ability learners showed improved Progress 8 scores in 2017. The progress 8 gap between PP and non PP students closed in 2017. Pupil Premium students made better progress in Maths and English in 2017 than in 2016 and they made more progress than the non-pupil premium students. Statemented and LAC students performed strongly across all elements of Progress 8 with most elements significantly above 0.

Indicated by:

- Progress 8 PP gap was -0.09 in 2017 compared with -0.33 in 2016
- Progress 8 for SEN – S was 0.91 in 2017 compared with -0.22

In-Year Progress:

The progress projected in year 11 across all subjects is expected to show an improvement again in 2018. This is due to further improvements in teaching quality, established teams in English, Mathematics, Science and a programme of tailored interventions with a focus on exam preparation and revision. Levels of progress across a range of subjects including Maths and English are above challenging academy targets in Years 7 to 10 (see Achievement Report for levels of progress across all years, groups and subjects). Students join the Academy with very low literacy skills and reading ages well below their chronological age. Academy records show that as a result of intensive literacy interventions students are quickly improving their reading ability.

Indicated by:

- Year 11 Progress 8 projection of 0 for 2018
- Students reading at chronological age has risen in each year group by around 30%

Improvement Priorities:

- Improve the P8 scores, particularly in Maths and English, by ensuring curriculum delivery supports more students achieving higher grades (5+, 7+)

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 Ofsted visit in October 2016 evaluated the Academy's own rigorous self-evaluation and consequently removed the Academy from 'Serious Weaknesses' and judged many areas as good.

In its self-evaluation the Academy's key judgements agreed with Ofsted that all key areas are good with the exception of outcomes Graded 3. 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, indicate that the Academy is swiftly improving towards grade 2 in this area that will also secure overall effectiveness as good.

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)