

Exceptional School's Award - Accreditation Report

School: Aylesbury Grammar School	Date of Audit: November 28 th 2016	Lead Assessor: Heather Clements
--	---	---

Overview:

Aylesbury Grammar School is an Exceptional School that richly deserves to achieve this award. Its values, espoused in the concept of "Respect and Aspire", underpin all aspects of the school. While maintaining strong traditions and links to the past through its house system and ethos the school is, never the less, forward and outward looking.

All those involved with the school show a deep commitment to it, with long serving staff and governors and students who feel privileged to attend such a good school, take pride in their achievements and know that they are cared for.

As a high performing selective school, it would be easy for the school to be complacent but it continues to strive for improvement, critically evaluating its performance against similar high performing boy's schools nationally and using high performing school data from Fisher Family Trust. This is followed by intense internal scrutiny of performance to ensure good practice is built on and emerging issues are dealt with promptly.

Summary of Exceptional Practice:

Among the school's many strengths the following areas were highlighted by stakeholders during the audit day:

- The head is ambitious for the school and looks continually at where marginal gains can be made and provision can be enhanced within the context of rapidly changing national expectations.
- This ambition is shared across the whole leadership team including middle leaders. The school sets high expectations for its pupils and they respond to this both in the classroom and on the sports field
- Boys entering the 6th form from other schools note the high expectations, are bowled over by the opportunities and flourish as a result
- The school does not pigeonhole boys into traditional masculine roles "boys can be who they want to be"
- Systems and processes to communicate with parents have significantly improved and are now highly efficient this includes a parent portal and on line booking for parent's evenings.
- The parent forum was seen a genuine opportunity for consultation and it was felt that the SLT listened to and acted on genuine concerns and issues raised.
- There are excellent pastoral support systems exemplified by the way the school addressed the issue of a pupil's death where boys felt it showed "that the school really cares for you"
- Extra-curricular opportunities are outstanding– not just the range of activities but the way they are used to develop students holistically, for example, awards given for helping others in a Y7 outward

bound activity, promoting independence, team building and confidence through school journeys, and ensuring that all learning opportunities are maximised so the ski trip was linked to aspects of American culture.

- Pupils say that they really value the amazing range of opportunities “there are things I’d never even heard of – scuba diving!!!” “they boost your confidence because you can do things you are really good at or enjoy”
- Excellent organisation ensures that parents are confident that their sons will be looked after and consideration is given to cost and accessibility so most pupils can participate
- Pupils hold the school in very high regard and feel that it is ambitious for their future with encouragement and support from teachers who want them to do well.
- Pupils are confident and aspirational setting themselves challenging goals.
- Boys aspire to be leaders within the school seeing the role of prefect as a recognition of their contribution to the school over time.
- The school encourages and provides opportunities for boys to take on responsibilities from their early years - this makes a significant contribution to their confidence, resilience and feeling of self worth.

Teaching and Learning

- Teachers have outstanding subject knowledge and a clear understanding of curriculum requirements and expected levels of attainment
- Teachers show a genuine care for and commitment to the boys they teach – the boys value teachers enthusiasm for their subject and their desire for every boy to succeed
- Behaviour is exemplary throughout the school and relationships are warm and respectful with little need for overt behaviour management – the degree to which this is developed by the school is reflected in the fact that Y7 boys are still settling in and do not always display the same behaviours.
- Boys are eager to learn, willing to ask questions and enter into a dialogue to extend their thinking. They have a mature attitude to collaborative learning and when given the opportunity to do so learn from and with their peers.
- Marking is thorough and developmental and teachers give ongoing feedback throughout lessons to progress the boys learning and address difficulties promptly.
- In the best lessons, teachers created challenging opportunities to engage and stretch the boys' learning.

Case Study

While it is easy to assume that a house system is the norm in many schools the system at Aylesbury Grammar School is exceptional. It builds on long traditions and encompasses all aspects of school life, enhancing provision, increasing engagement and opportunities and creating a deep rooted and positive loyalty.

From the start of their school career boys have a sense of belonging and links with older students and staff that they will maintain throughout their time at the school and beyond with many Old Boys continuing to support the school and their house.

The house system encourages engagement in a wide range of activities including sport and the arts often beyond pupils own strengths "It channels competitiveness and is a safe environment to be competitive". "It broadens the range of pupils you work with and promotes the need to help and support others and show leadership."

If you want to be a prefect you need to be involved with the whole year group and have to have shown engagement in wide range of activities and demonstrated leadership

"It improves the quality and depth of the work we do" and also finds hidden talents by engaging all pupils including those who lack opportunities outside school

It promotes collective endeavour which supports behaviour management. There is huge pride in belonging to a house and a responsibility to the house, so pupils are expected to set an example to others

It is important to students on a "cosmic scale"

Summary of areas for further development:

Review how information is shared with parents in the lower school as parents felt that they have to wait too long to get a report because it is not enough to assume that no news is good news as minor issues left for a whole year could become a problem.

Ensure that all stakeholders understand the role and remit of governors and ensure that governors are known to staff as currently there is a lack of understanding of lines of accountability

Ensure that the school continues to extend access to and understanding of new technology as though staff and pupils feel that technology is adequate, albeit a bit unreliable, they lack the understanding of the potential to use technology in innovative ways to genuinely enhance learning and teaching.

Embed AGS learning fully in every day engagement with pupils in and out of the classroom – while boys can talk about it and it is displayed prominently it doesn't feel an intrinsic part of school life – start at Y7

Ensure that every classroom has a clock – requested by pupils

Teaching and Learning

Teachers and students need to be clear about the learning intentions – why they are learning and what they are learning about

Teachers need to evaluate the impact of their teaching on pupil learning within lessons and modify and adapt their teaching more readily in response to unexpected progress or misconceptions

Teachers should require pupils to use appropriate transactional language when answering questions and

continue to probe and question to enable students to “up-level” their answers

Teachers need to be willing to take risks and allow students to learn from their mistakes rather than spoon feed them. Building on the best practice in the school they need to increase pace and challenge from the outset and extend the opportunities for students to investigate for themselves

Ensure that pupils are encouraged to make informed choices in their learning and be creative

Within post 16 provision consider how time is spent in lessons and private study so that teaching time is focussed on teacher input, discussion, reflection and collaboration for example by using “flip learning”

Further develop the innovative use of new technologies

Signed:

Heather Clements

Assessors:

Heather Clements & Valerie Osbaldeston

Date: November 28th 2016

Date for Reaccreditation: November 2020