
CHALLENGE PARTNERS: Quality Assurance Review Written Report

Name of School:	Mounts Bay Academy
School Address:	Boscathnoe Lane, Penzance, Cornwall
Hub:	Mounts Bay

Telephone Number:	01736 363240
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Unique Reference Number:	136873
Local Authority:	Cornwall
Type of School:	Comprehensive
School Category:	Academy
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16 years
Number on roll:	954
Head teacher/Principal:	Sara Davey

Date of last Ofsted inspection:	27 -28 June 2012
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Outstanding

Date of Quality Assurance Review:	5 – 7 December 2016
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QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW – SUMMARY OF ESTIMATES¹

School Improvement Strategies:	Outstanding
Outcomes for Pupils:	Outstanding
Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:	Outstanding
Area of Excellence: Real Projects	Confirmed and valid for 3 years

Previously accredited Areas of Excellence:

‘Curriculum Enrichment’ awarded 1st Oct. 2015

The academy has an inspiring array of clubs and activities as well as a huge variety of trips; local and global. Pupil leadership and engagement is promoted through programmes such as D.of E., The John Muir Award, Arts coaches and Sports Leaders. This has increased admissions.

Overall Review Evaluation

The Quality Assurance Review found indicators that Mounts Bay Academy appears to be just within the Outstanding grade as judged by Ofsted in the school’s previous Ofsted report and action is required to ensure that it continues to meet Ofsted’s criteria for that grade.

1. Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.

Information about the school

- The academy is an average size 11-16 secondary school and is one of two comprehensive schools in the coastal town.
- The school is a National Teaching School and a National Support School.
- The school became an academy in July 2011 and is a centre of excellence for sport and creativity.
- It has the Prince's Teaching Institute's subject awards in history, English, mathematics, science, music, art, leadership and a number of awards including the International School Award, Artsmark Awarding Centre and School Games Gold. It also has Leading Edge status and is a Specialist Schools Centre and an Academies Trust consultant school as well as being an Apple Distinguished school.
- The school has been oversubscribed for several years. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is a little below average. Few come from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with SEN support is above the national figure and just within the top 20%. The proportion with a statement of special educational need is broadly in line with the national average. There are a small number of children who are looked after by the local authority. There are more girls than boys in the school.

School Improvement Strategies

What Went Well

- The principal and senior leaders are very effective and drive an inspiring school ethos and culture. It is focused upon learning and promoting the ownership of pupil learning through an innovative and creative approach which ensures high outcomes, both personally and academically.
- The school has a clear and purposeful approach to the delivery of the curriculum. It has moved to assessment without levels and links this well to the culture of 'learning without limits' (except Yr 11 where 4 levels progress is expected in all subjects).
- The vision for school improvement is articulated within ten main school strategies and monitored through four leadership teams. The growth of leadership capacity and sustainability is a strong feature of the school, evidenced throughout the review. Senior leaders model very well the culture of openness, honesty and integrity.
- Systematic and highly focussed discussions take place through the development of CPD time to include 'Teachmeets', research groups and the general development of a 'community of practice', where staff share good practice and introduce innovative strategies across subject and school priority teams. The recent development of AFL groups has also highlighted expertise within specific areas.
- Performance management objectives have been identified for staff specifically to respond to Progress 8 results, pupil premium needs and safeguarding issues. These are specific and personalised to the individual teacher supporting personal professional development, whilst being linked to the whole school development plan (SDP).

- The school's development of a mastery curriculum has had a positive impact on pupil performance by teaching to the top and scaffolding steps to success for all. Pupils retain high expectations despite the removal of levels and appreciate the % rates received indicating knowledge and skills gains.
- The use of technology both for pupils and staff has advanced the agenda of personalised learning. Pupil use of iPads within a range of lessons seen allows them to work independently, at their own pace in the context of stretch and challenge. Consistent use of 'Firefly', located on the school's VLE, by staff as a resource base, has facilitated access to a range of resources for pupils and introduced new styles of learning. For example, 'flipped classroom learning' which was described by one pupil as a method a teacher had used recently.
- Careful identification of underachievement for pupils in KS3 through testing and regular assessment, highlights and tailors for individual programmes of need which ensure pupils do not continue in a fixed pattern of underachievement. Recent developments with feeder primary schools will enable the use of new test item analysis from KS2 SAT results. This will provide a tight focus upon individual need and all attainment groups, and target specific areas of improvement which will influence planning and curricular mapping. It will also provide a more incisive direction for pupil premium spending.
- The introduction of Rigorous, Engaging, Authentic Learning projects (REAL) has been an innovation that has improved pupil engagement and motivation. These projects have helped Yr. 7 pupils to grow in independence and creative thinking skills at a faster rate than normal. Aspects of this contextual learning are also being deployed in Yr 8 and pose exciting options for future development of curricula mapping and pedagogical development.
- The introduction of a new reward system to encourage 'excellence' has motivated pupils to achieve. Pupils spoke highly of the 'Da Vinci awards' which they can achieve in all subject areas.

Even Better If...

... the school developed one overarching School Development Plan, outlining clear improvement strategies to respond to the current needs of the school taking into account all the most up-to-date information. *(This needs to show how areas of strength are being dispersed, embedded and further developed and the areas for improvement made explicit. The senior leadership know their school very well and are very responsive to issues as they arise. The documents produced that support both improvement and evaluation need to be cohesive and more accessible to all audiences).*

... the school produced a short narrative to evaluate the information that it holds about pupil outcomes. *(This would provide an easily digestible picture for all stakeholders and external evaluators. It could take the form of headlines that would provide concise, convincing statements about attainment at the end of Y11 in key subjects and levels of progress within each year group, subject, phase and group).*

Pupil Outcomes

- On entry into the school, most pupils are at national expectations. Approx. 25 -30% were at L5+ for 2016. The school indicates that the proportion of higher attaining pupils entering in Year 7 is increasing. The prior attainment of pupils in cohorts 2017, 2018 and 2019 is mainly in line with the national average, however, the prior attainment for cohorts 2020 and 2021 is significantly above the national average.
- Attainment in 2016 for English and mathematics and Ebacc is significantly above the national average and in the top 10% of schools nationally.
- Attainment has steadily improved year on year for 5+A*-C across subjects including English and mathematics. In 2015 this was 66% and in 2016 was 74%.
- 5 A-C attainment was 73% in 2015 and improved to 76% in 2016.
- The 2015 Best 8, gave all pupils a value added score of 1013.1. However, high achievers only gained 986pts. Using 2015 performance measures, 2016 extrapolations provide results at overall 1016.4 and high attainers 1000.8, showing a steady improvement, particularly for the high prior attainment group.
- Current unvalidated RAISE data is inaccurate due to a number of remarks in key subjects. All headline measures have improved based on these re-marks, particularly progress which is projected to improve to +0.16 overall; which is above average.
- There were 6 pupils within the cohort who were accessing alternative provision. The provision refused to enter the pupils in all examinations. They had very low attendance. Their results had a significant impact on headline measures. When removed from the calculations for progress, no red shading would appear on RAISE and overall progress would be within the top 30% of schools nationally.
- When the above pupils are included, RAISE clearly identifies improvement is required for the progress of disadvantaged pupils overall, high and middle prior attainers in mathematics and with a particular focus on most able disadvantaged pupils, science and languages.
- Using secure extrapolation models to calculate 2016 3+ levels progress, then English progress fluctuates within the well above average range over the last three years of 2014, 2015 and 2016 at 97%, 85%, 91% respectively and mathematics at 69% , 70%, 74% respectively.
- Mathematics attainment, whilst still above the national average, is well below school outcomes for English at GCSE and E Bacc. The school is aware of this trend and is taking appropriate action to improve the situation.
- There is a noticeable in-school variation between boys' attainment in English and mathematics and that of girls. Boys' attainment is well above boys nationally and the gender gap is diminishing slowly over time.
- Internal predictions are predominantly accurate for key performance measures and subjects. Where predictions were inaccurate, these are challenged via performance management.

- Current internal data for cohort 2017 is strong with good projections for Progress 8 and Ebacc.
- Historically and over time in-school gaps for gender, and other groups are steadily diminishing.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment (the focus within lesson observation was linked to the school's key areas of development and improvement)

What Went Well

- The delivery of the curriculum using a 'Mastery' approach is consistently applied, alongside an assessment system which uses percentage gains of skills and knowledge rather than levels. Most teachers effectively deliver resources and levels of learning at the higher level, whilst scaffolding and re-framing it, for those who require more support whatever their prior attainment was. Teacher subject knowledge is very strong.
- A very secure feature in all lessons, is the high engagement of all pupils, demonstrating excellent behaviours for, and attitudes to, learning. Teachers develop an excellent rapport between and with their pupils.
- The embedded use of technology to support personalised learning and develop independent learning habits is evident across the school. Teachers and pupils are very clear on how and when to use their iPads. They exhibit mature attitudes to their use and it is evident that it is not a superficial aspect of their learning tools.
- The curriculum links to real world and cross-curricular examples within subjects which explicitly supports enjoyment, interest, engagement and impact on learning. The REAL project with Year 7 is an outstanding example of cross-curricular, contextualised learning.
- Teachers devise detailed planning of lessons which is shared and made available to all staff. This supports work-life balance and also shares good practice. Teachers know their classes very well and adjust planning to meet the needs of pupils and their context, to ensure effective pace and challenge in lessons and across learning sequences.
- The academic year is divided into four semesters. The structure for each incorporates diagnosis, therapy and testing linked to pupil reports and internal data analysis. These are creatively and effectively applied. The routine of the day and length of lesson time enables depth of learning to take place. Both pupils and staff speak very positively about the move to this timetabling format and structure.

Even Better If...

... all teachers embedded differentiation strategies, tasks and delivery in lessons, such as Kagan cooperative learning and thinking maps to ensure all pupils can achieve Mastery.

... there was an improved quality of teacher and peer questioning to engage all learners and provide more high ordering thinking skills to enable effective stretch and challenge.

... learning was connected through the school's 'essential questions' and 'do now' tasks.

... there were even more opportunities for pupils to develop and articulate the success criteria for tasks within lessons to ensure that pupils know what is required.

... marking was further embedded to align with MBA policy and there was a greater focus on the quality of the purple pen response, including self and peer assessment.

Quality of Area of Excellence

REAL projects

Why has this area been identified as a strength?

A key feature of the school's improvement plan is REAL projects, an innovative and inspiring programme of work completed in Year 7 and consisting of 4 carefully constructed projects, each one taught over 9 weeks, starting with an essential question such as 'How do you capture the spirit of a place?' and 'What makes an Adventurer?', to incorporate Art, Humanities and Literacy in a cross-curricular style project.

What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

All staff within the different departments involved have had training to ensure a good knowledge base and consistency across the year group and projects. A key aim has been to improve pupil engagement and motivation with learning outcomes achieved focused on reaching mastery level.

Experts and specialists from High Tech High (San Diego) who have carried out their education purely through REAL projects, have worked with staff on this project which has benefitted all staff within the different departments involved. Regular training, feedback and evaluation has ensured a good knowledge base and consistency across the year group and different projects.

4 lessons each week, two back to back, allow the pupils blocked time to be able to explore and extend the parameters of regular school subject areas to go out of school on trips which enhance and enrich this work.

What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?

Pupil voice provided evidence of pupil outcomes. Year 7 and Year 8 Pupils spoke articulately and proudly of the work they had achieved throughout each of their projects. They provided evidence of high quality project work which relied on independent research and creative thinking skills.

Two Year 8 pupils spoke about their REAL project and shared the final product which was a beautifully published book exhibiting their photography, art work and writings.

Pupils evidenced activities, developing such skills as collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and communication, where they worked together in groups to produce their final piece of work. Another pupil talked about these cross-curricular skills that transferred to other subject areas and he felt better prepared and more confident when learning in other

subjects as a result of the skills he had developed along his project journey, the use of mind mapping was one example.

The presence of an authentic audience in the final stage of the project reinforced the value of these projects and provided the platform for pupils to exhibit their outcomes and for the audience to offer feedback to the pupils. An example of one such audience included video feedback from an 'adventurer', Steve Backshall who complimented the pupils in their work of 'What makes an adventurer', thus reinforcing the value of this project.

The work done to develop and embed this project into the integral structure of the Year 7 curriculum has shown to be effective and is an example of excellent practice.

What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?

Following discussion with the headteacher, the school would like to reflect further about what support they might like.

This review will support the school's continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities.