

Self Evaluation Report

Agreed



The Fermain Academy

URN: 141935

School Context

BRIEF SUMMARY

Our School

The Fermain Academy is a 13-16yrs AP 'free school' with currently up to sixty students on roll. The school serves students from all over Cheshire East and beyond. All students have come to us through varying struggles in a mainstream school and all have individual needs. Students who are referred are at risk of permanent exclusion, some attend after being placed at a PRU and a number are vulnerable in a variety of ways. Almost all students have a persistent record of absence from their respective schools and can present with diagnosed and undiagnosed additional needs such as, Autism, Attachment, Dyslexia or ADHD.

Free School Meals currently make up 40% of our current cohort with 7% of our students being LAC or Previous LAC. 15% of our students are on an EHCP with a further 20% on our SEN register.

The Fermain Academy prides itself on its core values of being child centred, adaptive and sensitive to need and creating authentic relationships. We also strive for having solution focused mindsets and a culture of reflection and collaboration.

Quality of Education

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The Curriculum throughout the school is ambitious and coherently designed to maximise progress, attainment and achievement. This is seen through average progress of 100% of a GCSE level per year across school. All full-time learners achieved a minimum of 5 GCSEs including English and Maths (15% higher GCSE results in English, Maths, and Science than a nationally tracked average). National tracked attainment in AP across medical/mental health and behaviours have an average of 8.9 attainment score; in behaviour APs this is lower at 6.3 points against GCSE qualifications. As a school, our average is 13.7 with 46% of the year 11 cohort falling in the top 12% nationally, and 3 students in the top 5%.

The school annually sets out to create a compelling curriculum that sees all full-time students focus on a minimum of seven worthwhile qualifications (GCSE / BTEC / Technical). This is further enhanced by co-creation wherever possible with the students, capitalising on personal interests and ambitions which helps the school adapt its curricular and teaching approaches to further the holistic experience. This can most recently be seen with the introduction of Drama and Textiles to the curriculum from KS4 student-led planning. In KS3, students study a broad range of subjects compared to their peers in mainstream settings. In KS4 students choose options that are both vocational and academic and have clear progression routes to Education, Employment and Training. Curriculum subjects themselves have a detailed curriculum map that highlights the sequence of learning and essential/component knowledge needed for future success. Careers and post-16 destinations are a consistent golden thread throughout the school that fosters direction and focus in every student wherever possible. This has led to an overall consistent trend of 0% NEET year on year, 15.4% higher than the national on leaving school. This is tracked on a 3, 6, 9, 12, 18 months basis with 100% remaining in EET after 12 months, 47% higher than national statistics.

Following robust baselines and student profiling on entry, curriculums are adapted to meet the needs of students (identifying gaps in knowledge) while still accelerating their learning to catch up with their peers. Through comprehensive planning that highlights how knowledge is recapped and built upon we see significant gains across all cohorts. This is demonstrated by an average of 100% progress across the school, the majority of full-time year 11 (93%) achieving 5 GCSEs from a year 11 cohort that saw 79% as persistent non-attenders before being placed at The Fermain Academy. Inherently the school strives to provide expertise in all elements of each child's development, however, due to the size of the school, it is essential that staff have both, quality knowledge of their subject, and can also adapt and deliver beyond their core teacher training. This is supported with quality CPD through in-house, external and across the Trust training. External partner schools also support this development through networks and quality assurance processes. Planning is essential to deliver high-quality teaching and learning. The curriculum is mapped using long- and medium-term plans so that the subject matter is presented clearly and promotes discussion. Through this process teaching is adapted to respond to the needs of students to check the correct understanding of core knowledge and subject matter. Lessons are sequenced so that content is remembered long-term and is built on across the Key Stages. This is evidenced through regular lesson observations and learning walks ensuring the teacher standards are regularly met, 73% of lessons have been rated as outstanding with 21% being good. When a staff member is underperforming a rigorous support package is put in place to help them to develop.

During the pandemic, the school only closed for a short period and worked tirelessly to provide education and support to our whole cohort as they are all vulnerable. Remote education has been key to delivering a curriculum in recent years, when students are required to access remote education using online platforms, working from hard teaching materials or a hybrid method of the two and is devised on a one-to-one basis depending on pupils' needs. All staff are fully competent in using online platforms and teachers use this to further support learning at home

Ensuring that assessment is used effectively is fundamental to successful planning. Half termly data collections are then used to support medium-term plans and address gaps in learning. Due to students starting at different points throughout the year robust baseline assessments are completed so clear destinations can be created for each student. Further to this a staff panel meets regularly to analyse data which will then form intervention strategies. The core culture prioritises the student at the heart of its creation and supports the learning of the students. Staff are creative in their use of materials and resources so that they aid in the planning and delivery of the curriculum. High-quality work is celebrated and displayed to aid in students' understanding. Students' achievements are promoted across the school and work that is produced is celebrated and shared with parents.

The school was awarded the Inclusion Quality Mark excellence status in 2018. In 2020 we were awarded Flagship Status along with only three other APs in the country. Reading was the recent focus point for our IQM Flagship review and is being embedded throughout the curriculum. Students reading ages are assessed and this is shared with all staff along with interventions to use in lessons. Students are encouraged to read in lessons and this is built into the rewards system. We were also awarded the Basic Skills mark in 2017 and this was renewed in 2020 as the Quality Mark which shows a cross-curricular link with literacy and numeracy across the school and that we identify interventions. Students with SEND achieve outperformed their peers both nationally and within the academy. Across tracked AP attainment outcomes for SEN children sit at 7.6 attainment score. SEN students at Fermain (2 full-time in year 11) average an attainment score of 19.5

Behaviour and Attitudes

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The school have high expectations for student behaviour and conduct and can be seen across the school, an example of this can be seen with the expectations on entry to the school: all students arrive at school and hand over all banned substances (smoking paraphernalia) and phones, this is done voluntarily with no issues every day.

Systems and processes are well embedded in school to support students when they become dysregulated within the school day. Low-level disruption is addressed where ever possible in class but if needed members of staff can support the child outside of class helping them to remove the issues preventing engagement to minimise loss of learning. These expectations are commonly understood and applied consistently and fairly. This is reflected in pupils' positive behaviour and conduct. Low-level disruption is not tolerated and pupils' behaviour does not disrupt lessons or the day-to-day life of the school.

Bullying is not tolerated in any form. If bullying does happen it is quickly dealt with and staff make sure further support is given to the students both restoratively and to help address any misconceptions. All students attending the Fermain academy have experienced difficulties in their education, most attend due to persistent or server behavioural issues. Given this background, leaders have set clear expectations of behaviour in school. Behaviour is focused on positive responses to the right behaviours, all students can achieve positive dojo points per lesson and this is celebrated weekly through praise assemblies and reward trips.

Dojo data shows the average point score is 94% positive across the cohort in Autumn 1. 87.5% of the cohort is above 90% positive across the school and those students attending above 85% have an average positive score of 96%. Though fully trained in positive handling, this practice is only ever used in the most severe circumstances, there have only been 8 physical incidents since 2017 (average of 1.6 a year) for an average time in a hold at 1 min 23 seconds. Though this is a non-tracked data point in comparison to schools we link with this is incredibly low in comparison.

Good attendance is critical to a successful education, with the school cohort often full school refusers and persistent non-attenders. Students dramatically improve their attendance while at school, the overall attendance between 2017-2019 was between 87.1% and 91.3%. the average increase in cohort attendance from home schools during this period was 26.1%. Following the pandemic, as with the national picture, it has been far harder to get students to engage and get them regularly attending. The schools' current attendance is 79.1% this is 26.1% higher than the national AP trended data, the cohort has seen their combined attendance hugely increase from their previous settings from 52.79% to 79.1% an overall improvement of 26.31% meaning the students are now in school 50.22% more than before.

Our recent SIP visit comments are

- Pupils' attitudes to their education are positive. They are committed to their learning, know how to study effectively and do so, are resilient to setbacks and take pride in their achievements.
- In discussion with the SIP pupils voiced: "I want to come to school and lessons now", "the calm environment helps me stay calm" and "we appreciate the teachers, we know they teach at this school because they care"
- Relationships among pupils and staff reflect a positive and respectful culture; pupils are safe and they feel safe. This stems from the establishment of authentic relationships across the school, (student to teacher, teacher to student, student to student) through consistently high expectations, mutual respect and high levels of emotional intelligence that build a calm, non-confrontational approach which results in students feeling known and heard, being more engaged and secure in their learning, more open to challenge and able to collaborate more effectively with each other.
- "A school full of staff who genuinely care about the pupils. Positive, trusting relationships are evident in all interactions that take place" – SIP feedback November 2022

Personal Development

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The school sees student progress as something that has to go beyond attainment in qualification outcomes. The school builds a wide profile on each child from entry focusing firstly on engagement and attendance, quickly moving to build a specific profile around personal and emotional development and behaviour for learning. This allows interventions and therapeutic services to support the student to reach their potential.

The wider development and exposure to the world is also a focus for the school, supporting both parents and students with workshops around drug prevention and major safeguarding issues. In addition to these specific areas, the student's view of the world is expanded where ever possible by trips to local care homes, emergency service providers, special events at art galleries and presentations such as the 'knife angle'. Breakdown days are also used to bring in cultural themes from around the world as well as hot topics such as climate control, to develop an understanding of the world they live in.

The school uses detailed personal, social, and emotional development (PSED) trackers for every student. The system ascertains a learner's development over five areas: self-control and management of behaviour, self-awareness and confidence, social skills, skills for learning, and approach to learning. This data is taken across the whole school on every student termly, with those that need attentive intervention reviewed during the half term in between the data drops. This has led to an overall cohort for 2021/22 maintaining an average of 3.59 (3 being the average expected) with the full-time year 11 students average at 3.75

Students join the academy after already experiencing a wide range of adversity with their education. Often vastly below their peers, with undiagnosed needs and resentment toward both education and adults. The school works on this basis, doing wonderful work to break down barriers quickly to give each child a sense of belonging and identity.

Working specifically around a positive and rewards approach the majority of the students and parents see a dramatic change in outlook. This is further captured to then harness this newfound engagement into learning pathways, that through a mixture of detailed destination planning and quick wins, inspire students to make rapid progress. Pastoral support works hand in hand with teachers delivering curricular subjects to build rounded interventions and student areas for development, this also dovetails into the RSE and PSHE curriculums to develop understating of self, others, healthy relationships, as well as physical and mental health.

Students who attend the school, generally have had little opportunity to understand and explore the world beyond their local community. To drive a better understanding of how to thrive in our globally connected world, RSE and PSHE is a full timetable subject that not only supports holistic development of 'self', others, and healthy relationships but also fundamental British values creating an understanding of the multi-cultural aspects and celebrated diversity seen across the country.

The school dedicates a minimum of a half term to equality and diversity education covering in detail aspects of respect and protected characteristics. Work is further undertaken by the pastoral team/therapeutic services if students through this work need further help in seeking personal identity or support through safeguarding due to disclosures brought to light.

Our careers worker ensures that all sections of the Gatsby Benchmark are covered, and all pupils have one-to-one time so that they gain an understanding of their career opportunities. They are given development in how to write a CV, and fill out application forms and supported through interviews, year 11 pupils are taken to local college open days and careers exhibitions. Work experience also forms part of the curriculum and this has led to successful apprenticeships.

Leadership and Management

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The school is relentless in its vision to support our vulnerable cohorts' progress, achieve and become lifelong learners. Leaders share a strong vision and co-created values to ensure staff emulate quality practice for the holistic development of each and every child. The Leadership team are developing the pedagogical process of Inquiry-Based Learning to increase retention and ambitiously create self-motivated, self-directed learning. This is being developed through being a certified LAB school with the University of Bolton and its concerted effort with 77 LAB schools internationally (The Fermain is the only AP school accepted onto the programme). The school has engaged in a variety of peer-to-peer network events and visits to both the Fermain academy and mainstream schools to develop protocols for the improvement and development of teaching and learning.

The school expertly deploys a synergised approach to the development of each child. Given their start points, which are often vastly behind their peers, various support mechanisms focus on addressing improvements in four key elements: attendance, personal development, behaviour and learning. The systems in place help keep all staff informed and through regular review meetings between the whole staff and specific focus parties they are able to adapt their approaches to maximise the schools' effect.

Parents and communities are key stakeholders to engage when helping any student at the school. The school was awarded the Leading Parent Partnership award for its parental engagement. The school communicates with parents on a regular basis with weekly update phone calls and regular correspondence about events. The school's behaviour system also plays an essential part in communication, offering parents the opportunity to see their child's behaviour in real time per day. Additionally, they can access the learning happening throughout the school through its school story, and communicate with any individual employed by the trust who is involved with the school (all staff, local governors, central team and trustees). The current engagement with this system is 90% of parents, the school sends home photos and has more regular phone contact with the 10% not on the system. The school also eagerly engages with employers and the local community. The School is an active partner in the Cheshire and Macclesfield pledge working with over 100 businesses and employers across the local authority to bring real-world context to the learning undertaken and develop a robust careers strategy to inspire each student.

As almost all students are dual registered it is equally important to work in partnership with the home schools/commissioners. The school approaches this in multiple ways such as data drops, phone calls, face-to-face update meetings and co-produced destination meetings for all services and parents/carers in each student's life. Regular meetings are held as a staff team to discuss and co-create processes and procedures, this gives leaders the opportunity to refine change developments and communicate why this is happening. Leaders also have regular check-ins with staff which is a minimum of half-termly and can be as frequent as daily.

As a standard staff are given a minimum of 4.5 hours of non-directed time per week to focus on planning and marking so little to no work has to go home, this is in addition to an average teaching time of 85% of the timetable. This time is given to the whole school so collaboration can take place across the school, further developing a culture of support and shared practice. Twice a year the trust deploys a pulse survey to anonymously capture a consensus amongst staff; leaders then develop further strategies to support staff and school improvement using a 'you said, we did' format.

Bullying is not tolerated whether between students or staff. Leaders are quick to address anything presented such as offhand low-level comments to make sure nothing escalates, this is done through optional restoratives or line-management processes. The trust has an HR manager that is available to address issues or whistle-blowing/allegations, if staff feel they need to go outside of the school leadership team, the ELTs are also highly visible and available if needed. No reports of bullying have been recorded at the school. The Trust have a clear strategy for school improvement and development which has been articulated to all schools in the trust. The school development plan is tied against the different development strands and attuned to the needs of the cohort. The overall focus of the strategy is the holistic development of the school to support learning in every context.

Local governors play a vital role in the review of procedures and processes specific to the cohort in the school. This is done through formal meetings termly and governor visits around specific areas either linked to roles such as safeguarding or health and safety or elements of the SEF / SDP. These reviews and meetings are then fed up to the trust board which likewise holds regular meetings and observes both the local board meetings and visits schools to review systems and processes. Governors form an effective role in the school with open relationships with staff and two-way conversations. Regular visits are made to the school and they form part of our school community. Staff complete yearly training so they can identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation and what to do when they are identified. The culture of safeguarding is embedded through everything we do. Staff are trained in how to have those difficult conversations with pupils with none leading questions, CPOMS is used effectively to report safeguarding concerns with the RRA model- the Report, Risk and Action taken by the member of staff. The DSL then reviews all CPOMS reports made and actions appropriately. We work in partnership with other agencies to create the wrap-around care that pupils need.

Overall

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At The Fermain Academy our overarching moral purpose is to transform lives and secure better futures. We do this by raising expectations and aspirations, recognising achievements and acknowledging potential. This demands an individualised whole-education approach, facilitated in small working groups, under trusted adult role models. We want to guide students to recognise their own achievements, by delivering a personalised curriculum that raises attainment to allow students to sit a minimum of five GCSEs (or equivalent) wherever possible. In this way, we will prepare them for a life in modern Britain where they can truly meet their full potential.

The Fermain Academy is specifically designed to encourage all students to generate their own alternative view points and ideas and to be respectful of and consider the views of others. To achieve this result, we will deliver a complete academic, social and emotional learning experience through multiple curriculum pathways This will be reinforced by creating and maintaining safe and stimulating learning environments and implementing robust systems of behaviour.