



**Athena**  
Sixth Form College



# Self Evaluation

## Intent

We are an ambitious school which has high aspirations and expectations for our students.

We want to provide an education that is challenging yet accessible and relevant to the young people in our care. We want to inspire them to become life-long learners that empowers them to be valuable members of society.

We offer all of our students many opportunities to enhance their learning through trips and visits that are both local and further afield. Our extensive extracurricular programme provides all students with opportunities to learn new skills and improve on existing ones outside of the normal classroom environment; make new friends and develop life skills such as communication, teamwork and resilience.

Knowing each student and member of staff individually allows us to build positive, mutually respectful relationships that support learning and create a culture of academic aspiration where success is celebrated. Promoting inclusivity, equality and diversity is fundamental to our academic curriculum and personal development programme.

We want our students and staff to feel valued, respected and safe and we place great emphasis on their personal development and welfare.

All students will enjoy the same opportunities which will involve providing additional, targeted support for individuals and groups such as those eligible for the pupil premium or those with SEND.

## Historic context

Downham Market Academy was re-brokered in the summer of 2017 following an inspection by Ofsted in April 2017 where the school was deemed “inadequate” in all areas (other than 16-19 study programmes) with an “overall effectiveness” rating of “inadequate”. This followed a journey of several years where the school was supported through various Ofsted inspections that deemed provision “requires improvement”.

The school required special measures because it was “failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school [were] not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school”.

At the point of re-brokerage, Downham Market Academy had a financial deficit of £600,000 because of a falling roll.

The Cambridgeshire Educational Trust took over sponsorship of Downham Market Academy in November 2017 and this Trust merged with the Morris Educational Trust in September 2020 to form a new multi-academy trust, the Eastern Learning Alliance.

## Current context

Downham Market Academy is a popular school which is full in the 2021 intake for Year 7. Our current number on roll is 1121 including 100 at Athena Sixth Form College. Our catchment is geographically large and mainly rural with students joining us in Year 7 from a large number of primary schools. 25% of students are eligible for pupil premium and 15% have recognised special education needs at “K” or “E” level.

At Downham Market Academy we relish challenges and seek to meet them with creative solutions and forward-thinking ways to improve teaching and learning and the overall experience for our students.

Our staff hope to inspire their own subject passion in their students and to create self-assured and independent young people who can play a full and active part in the community.

## Overall effectiveness

Downham Market Academy is a good school.

We are not content with being good and so we are committed to improve rapidly in all areas. We have high aspirations for our students and all staff share the vision to engage our students and the wider community to provide excellent opportunities for both academic progress and personal development.

We work in close collaboration with other schools in the Eastern Learning Alliance to promote creativity amongst our staff and we encourage them to plan lessons that will inspire a generation of young people. Effective quality assurance and monitoring within the school and by the Trust means that leaders know what the school does well and what needs to be prioritised for further improvement.

Evaluation within the school takes place at all levels but starts with individual teachers having a sense of pride in their role and being accountable for the progress and wellbeing of students in their groups. Heads of subject know the strengths and areas for development of individuals in their team and support them to engage with the high-quality CPD opportunities on offer each week. Regular line management meetings hold curriculum leaders to account and ensure open and consistent lines of communication between senior leaders and teaching staff. A strong NQT induction programme has supported a large number of teachers to make a successful start to their teaching careers over the last few years and we seek to build on this under the new Early Career Framework.

Our culture of safeguarding ensures that we are a happy and safe community where individuals are valued and their wellbeing is a priority. We have awards from the Antbullying Alliance as an "All Together" school recognising the improvements in our proactive and reactive antibullying processes and we are working towards the "Rainbow Flag" award to recognise our commitment to promote inclusivity and diversity in the community. Knowing each student individually is fundamental to our intent that all students will achieve their academic potential and that our students and staff can thrive whilst at the school. Student numbers are increasing as we attract and retain more each year and staff retention has drastically improved to allow more stability within the school.

There are a wide range of well-attended extra curricular activities on offer for students that also includes a Trust-wide offer in partnership with other schools in the Eastern Learning Alliance. All students will attend at least one enrichment experience every term where their learning will extend beyond the classroom and the school gates.

## Covid-19 recovery

Downham Market Academy continues to offer a full curriculum to all students in the wake of the two national lockdowns that resulted in school closures. All students in KS4 continue to study the full range of courses they opted for and no student has a narrowed curriculum. Our teaching and learning strategy for 2020/21 focused on an accelerated learning approach where key concepts were identified within each subject to address any cumulative dysfluency in learning. We seek to build on this during 2021/22.

Provision during both the first and second lockdown was highly engaging and supported academic progress, personal development and student welfare. During the first lockdown students accessed a blend of live and recorded lessons and this was improved for the lockdown in January 2021 where teachers were able to interact with groups and individuals using the implementation of a whole-school commitment that every student is provided with an iPad. 70% of students were fully engaged in online learning during the Covid-19 lockdown with a further 20% mostly engaged. The remaining 10% were offered bespoke support. A range of extracurricular clubs were facilitated online and all staff shared responsibility for maintaining personal contact with every student to ensure positive wellbeing and mental health. Vulnerable children and those whose parents are key workers were welcomed to onsite provision where they engaged in the same remote learning activities as students at home and also benefited from the social aspects of being in school as well as targeted emotional or academic support as necessary. For those with specific concerns, personalised support programmes were developed to aid the transition to full onsite learning.

# The quality of education

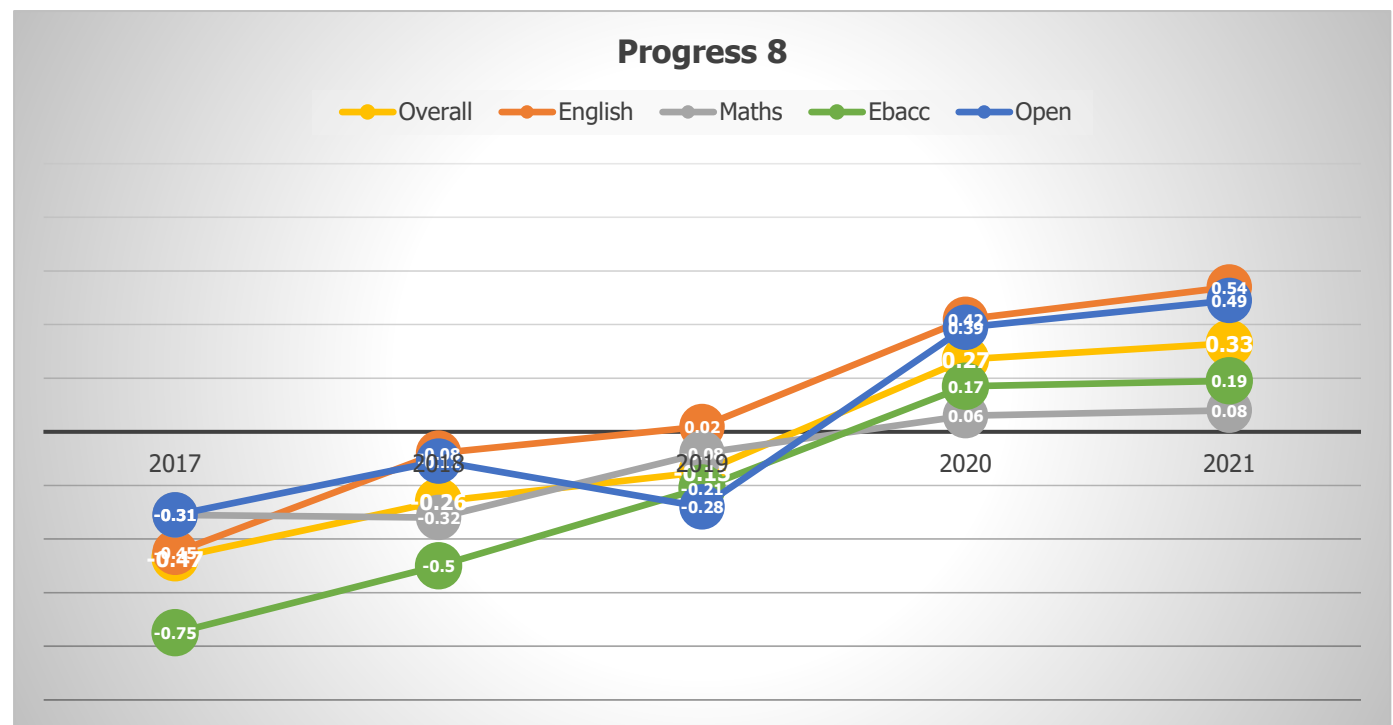
## Intent

Our [curriculum](#) will equip students with the cultural capital, knowledge and passion for education that they need to feel empowered and become great citizens of the world, as well as pursuing their future goals. The curriculum will be broad and sequenced by leaders who are subject specialists who own their planning to build on previous learning to develop themes, understanding and mastery of concepts. Disadvantaged students will be identified and known to staff who will provide additional support to ensure they have the same opportunities as the rest of the student body.

## Implementation

- Simple teaching & learning strategy based on research into effective learning
- Students are active in their learning
- Introduction of aspirational culture of learning using FFT5+ potential (target) grades
- Common assessments planned, moderated and validated across the Trust to ensure robustness of data
- Teachers plan for and model work at the highest grade potential in the class and provide scaffolding to support students to reach it
- Accelerated learning groups created for those identified as working below expectations at primary schools
- Targeted support for those that need it included academic or pastoral
- All students have an iPad to enhance learning in the classroom and at home
- Introduction of new subjects: Latin, classical civilisations, ancient history, astronomy

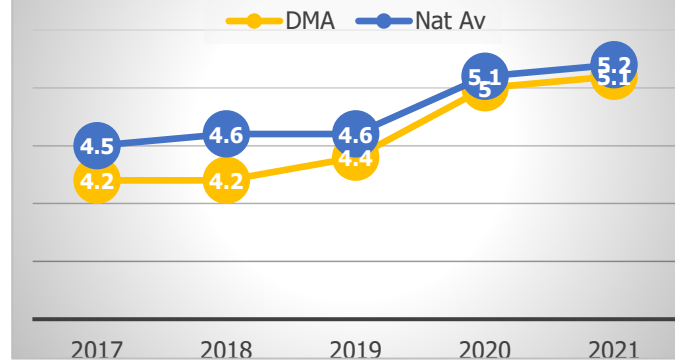
## Impact



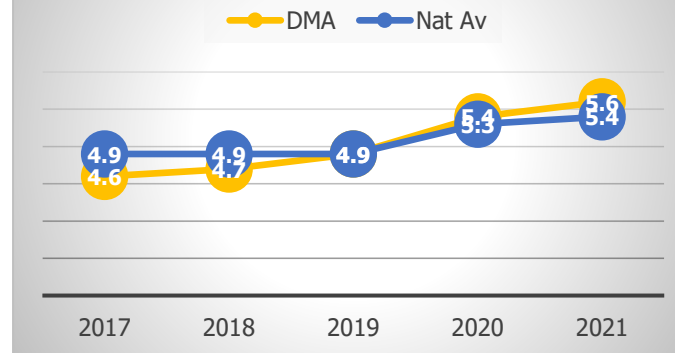
*In 2020/21:*

- 75% of Year 7 students with an EHCP were on or above their potential grades in English, Maths or Science
- 100% of Year 8 & 9 students with an EHCP were on or above their potential grades in English, Maths or Science

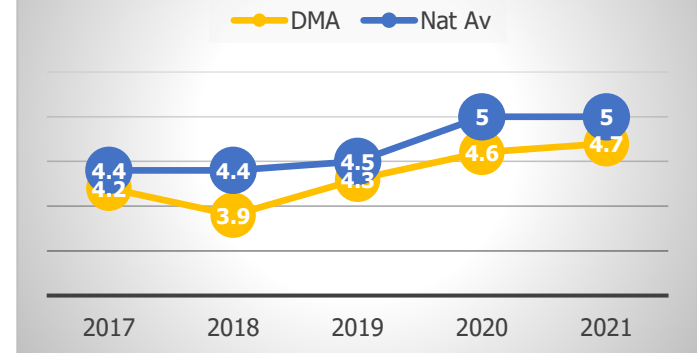
### Attainment 8: Overall



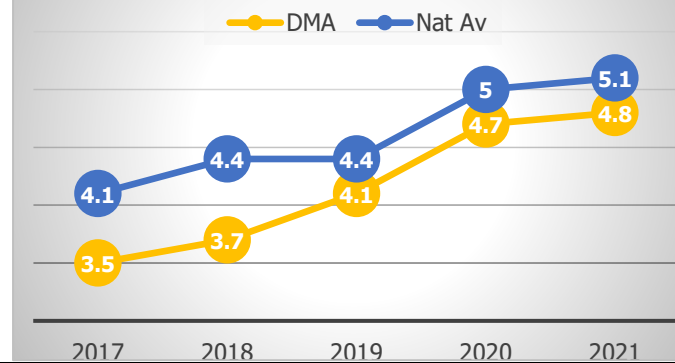
### Attainment 8: English



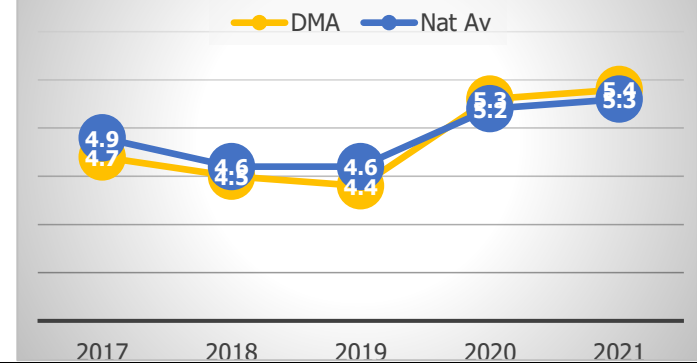
### Attainment 8: Maths

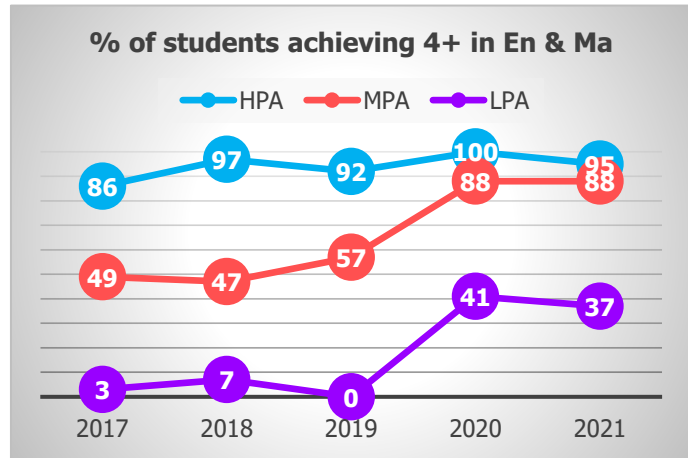
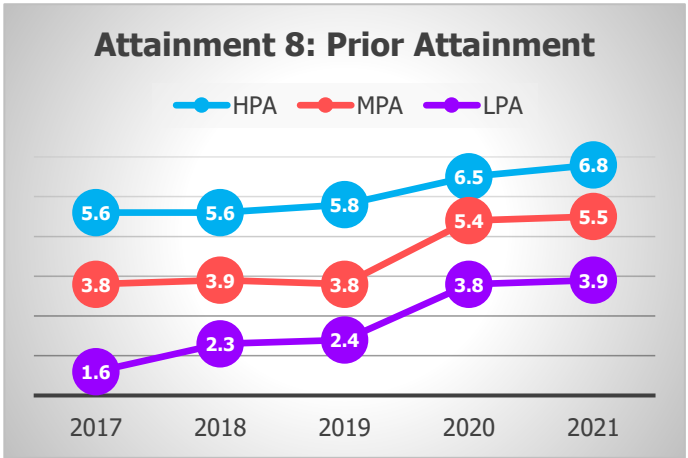
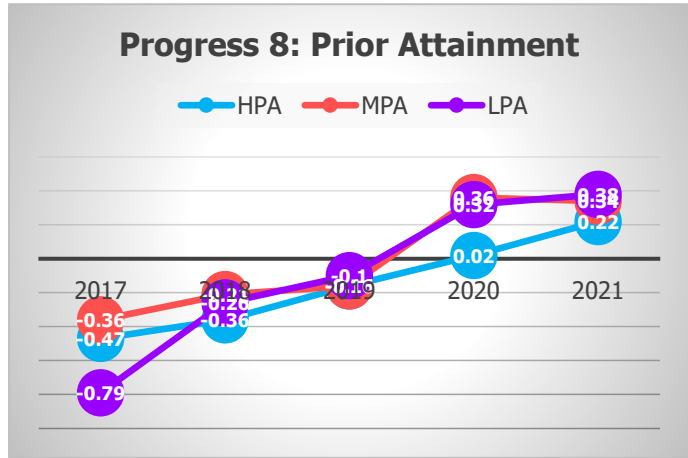


### Attainment 8: Ebacc



### Attainment 8: Open

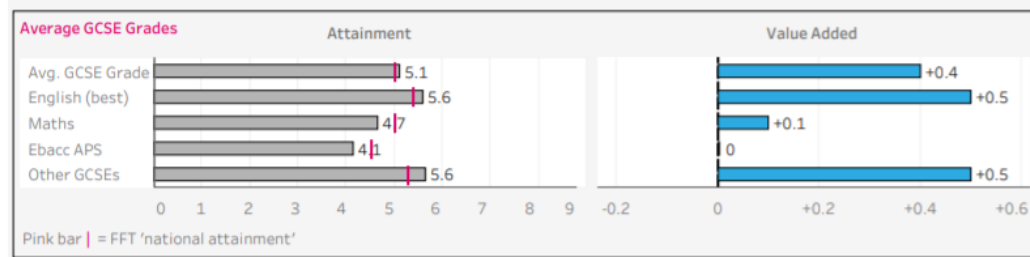




*% of students achieving grade 4 or above in end of year assessments (2021):*

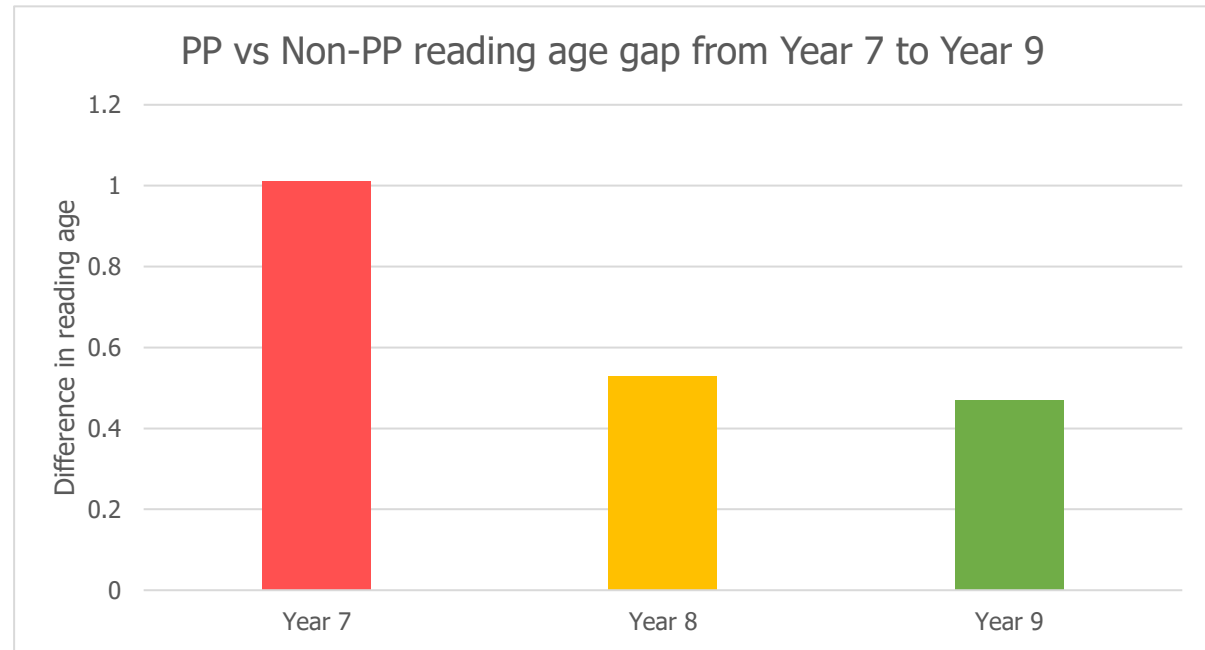
|                    | Year 7  |       | Year 8  |       | Year 9  |       |
|--------------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
|                    | English | Maths | English | Maths | English | Maths |
| <b>All</b>         | 81.2    | 86    | 90      | 84.2  | 90.3    | 65.3  |
| <b>PP</b>          | 62.9    | 76.2  | 87.3    | 76.6  | 82.4    | 52.9  |
| <b>Non PP</b>      | 88.7    | 90.1  | 91.3    | 87.7  | 93.5    | 70.4  |
| <b>SEN E&amp;K</b> | 54.6    | 55    | 86.9    | 80.5  | 52.7    | 47.7  |
| <b>Non SEN</b>     | 88.8    | 93.4  | 94.5    | 91.8  | 94.7    | 73.5  |

*From FFT Aspire 2021 result analysis:*



- Reading for pleasure at least once a week during personal development time and DEAR events
- Themed reading events throughout the year eg gothic, Christmas book fayre, picnics
- Subject-specific texts read within academic subject areas
- NGRT tests completed and data shared to inform staff or reading ages, appropriate texts and strategies to improve reading
- Targeted individuals in year 7 and 8 as identified in NGRT will be given dedicated time on timetables for Lexia
- A diagnostic report is visible in feedback books enabling students to visibly see progress and the impact of regular reading for pleasure from Accelerated Reader
- Investment in physical books and online library (SORA)

*Reading age data from GL assessment showing impact of reading and literacy interventions and better first teaching in the classroom:*



# Leadership & Management

## Intent

Leadership will be evident throughout the school with all teachers taking responsibility for the academic progress and personal welfare of students in their lessons; those with TLRs being accountable for improvements within their designated area and the senior team striving for excellence in all areas. Staff wellbeing is paramount and all staff will be supported to progress in their career.

## Implementation

## Impact

- Significant financial investment in the buildings and facilities – over £5 million in four years

- A safe, comfortable, inviting and technology-rich environment in which to learn and work

- Staff wellbeing is paramount: investment in full wellbeing service; negotiation with local businesses for staff discounts; staff discount for gym membership; sports & social activities; “wellbeing Wednesday”

- Staff morale is high – 98% of staff said they felt valued and supported at the Academy. 100% of staff felt their line manager was approachable and 98% said that communication was clear with deadlines that supported their wellbeing
- Staff absence is low (2% in 2020/21), despite ongoing pressures of Covid-19
- Staff recruitment is good – no vacancies in September 2021

- CPD programme that supports all staff: NQTs, established teachers, middle and senior leaders as well as governors

- All staff take part in CPD at least once a week that is planned to support the School Improvement Plan and priorities based on quality assurance

- Comprehensive support for ECTs
- Continued additional support for recently qualified teachers and new teachers
- Established ITT training programme with University of Buckingham, University of East Anglia, University of Cambridge & CTSN
- Trust programme for aspiring senior leaders and governors
- Professional coaching for staff undertaking qualification such as NPQH
- External partners lead on CPD

- High completion rate of NQTs and improving retention

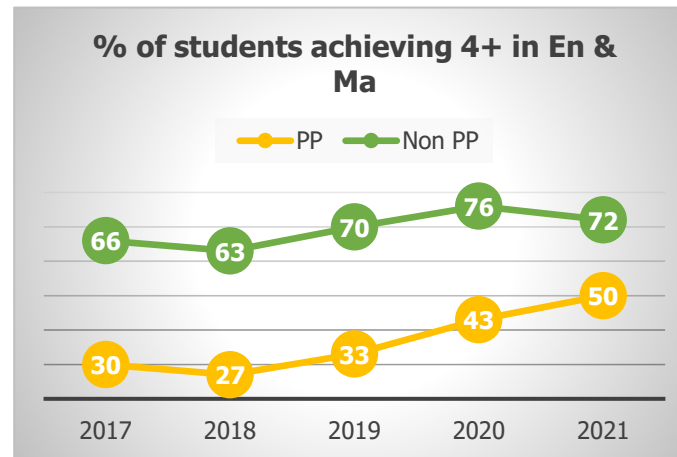
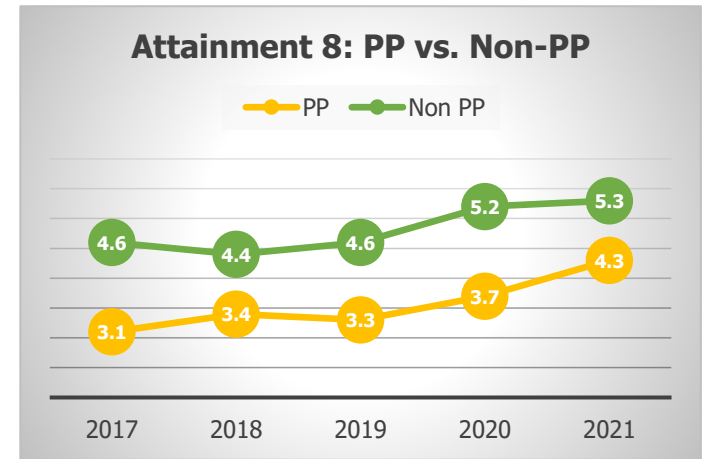
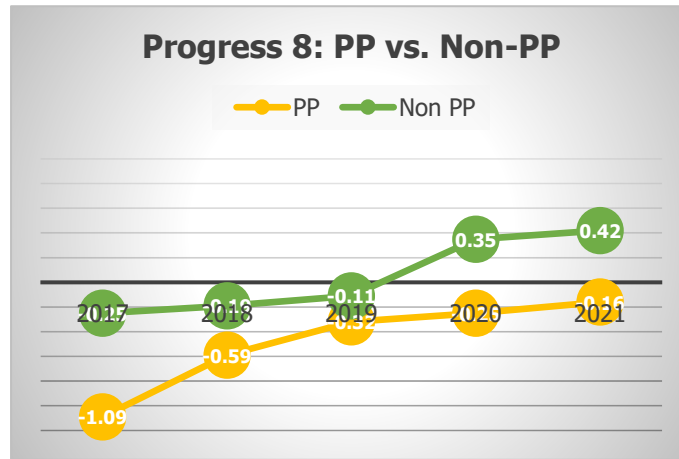
|             | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 |
|-------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| NQTs / ECTs | 6       | 6       | 8       | 22      | 11      |
| % pass      | 83%     | 100%    | 100%    | 100%    | -       |
| Retained    | 50%     | 67%     | 63%     | 86%     | -       |
| ITTs        | 2       | 3       | 5       | 5       | 5       |

- Leaders collaborate with counterparts at schools within the Trust on planning and quality assurance

- 88% of trainees supported through University of Buckingham route to QTS status have successfully completed the course and all of these are now permanent members of staff



- Research and collaboration within the Trust is used to inform spending of additional funding to ensure maximum impact



# Personal Development, Behaviour & Welfare

## Intent

All students will feel safe in school and they will feel confident to report any concerns for their own welfare or that of their peers. A culture of safeguarding will be promoted where diversity is celebrated and equality is embraced. Where students or families need additional support, safeguarding staff will provide appropriate advice or intervention. There will be a zero tolerance approach to peer on peer abuse and all staff, students and parents will understand what this is and how we deal with it.

Attendance will be at least 96% for all students with timely challenge and support where this expectation is not met.

Behaviour for learning in lessons will be excellent and clear and consistent expectations will be modelled by staff who are empowered to challenge any disruption to learning. Behaviour outside of lessons will be exemplary, both during social times inside school and outside of school in the local community. Positive behaviours will be recognised and reinforced by a whole-school rewards policy. For students who need additional support with their behaviour, targeted interventions will be arranged to allow for reflection and improvement.

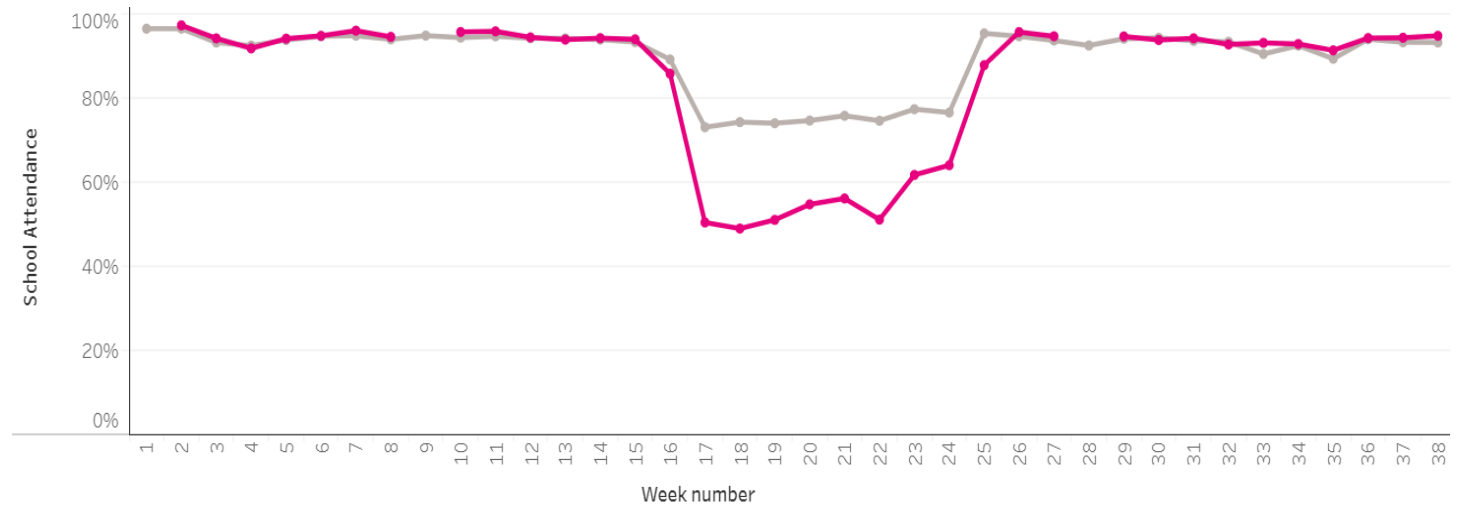
In PSHE and RSE students will learn life skills and the knowledge and understanding of the real world to become respectful members of a community that they contribute to positively. All students will make informed decisions on next steps in their education and beyond based on thorough and effective careers advice. All students will engage in extracurricular clubs and experience learning outside the classroom and attend trips to complement courses or develop life skills.

| Implementation   | Impact   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit of antibullying process</li> <li>• Regular safeguarding training for all staff</li> <li>• Collaboration with local partner agencies to support students and/or their families</li> <li>• Working towards Rainbow Flag Award (due for completion January 2022)</li> <li>• Introduction of Trust "5R framework" for peer on peer abuse</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antibullying Alliance "All Together School" gold &amp; silver awards achieved</li> <li>• All reported cases of bullying in 2020/21 were resolved and the victims remain positive about the outcome</li> <li>• All staff are confident in their responsibility to safeguard children and provide support for wellbeing</li> <li>• Pride club formed with 100% of students identifying as LGBTQ+ feeling supported</li> </ul> <p><i>Student survey in July 2021:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% of students know how to access support should they need it</li> <li>• 95% of students feel that DMA supports them with wellbeing</li> <li>• 95% of students feel safe at school</li> </ul> <p><i>Parent / carer survey in July 2021:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 92% of parents said their child was happy at DMA</li> <li>• 93% of parents said their child felt safe at DMA</li> <li>• 98% of parents feel that DMA supports student wellbeing</li> <li>• 86% of parents said they believed DMA makes sure students are well-behaved</li> <li>• 82% of parents said that DMA dealt well with bullying</li> <li>• 86% of parents would recommend DMA to another parent/carers</li> </ul> |

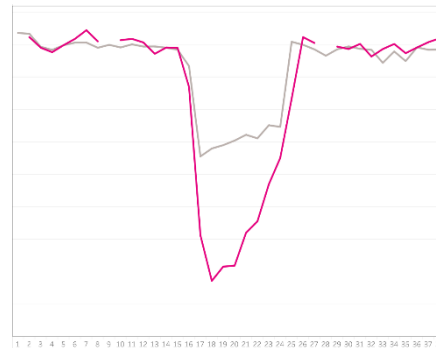
- Support for vulnerable families from within the school and external agencies
- 1:1 home tuition for long-term absentees with phased reintegration
- More informal & legal challenge to poor attendance implemented sooner and at higher thresholds
- Extended day for those who regularly miss days
- Collection of students
- Students and parents have ready access to attendance trends and stats
- Good attendance celebrated and rewarded every week

Figures taken from FFT Aspire that compares over 2500 secondary schools to provide an "national average" (the pink line is DMA and the grey line is the national average)

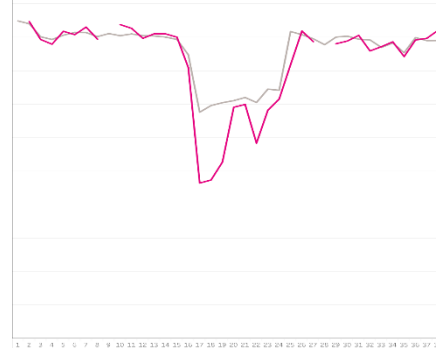
*Overall attendance was on or above the national average*



*PP attendance was above the national average*



*SEND "K" attendance was at the national average*



*SEND "E" attendance was significantly above the national average*



| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New behaviour policy implemented in 2017 that is consistently applied</li> <li>• Proactive behaviour improvement interventions in school and with external partner agencies, particularly for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged students</li> <li>• Alternative provision on site for those students exhibiting most challenging behaviour allows for continued academic education and dedicated 1:1 support for behavioural needs</li> <li>• Safer schools police officer supporting the most vulnerable</li> <li>• CPD for staff to ensure effective support &amp; challenge for students, particularly those with SEND</li> </ul> | <table border="1" data-bbox="788 150 1995 360"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measure</th> <th>2017/18</th> <th>2018/19</th> <th>2019/20</th> <th>2020/21</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Permanent exclusions rate (National average)</td> <td>1.21% (0.10%)</td> <td>0.62% (0.10%)</td> <td>0.19% (0.06%)</td> <td>0.39% (-)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fixed term exclusion rate (National average)</td> <td>12.53% (10.13%)</td> <td>15.15% (10.75%)</td> <td>9.71% (7.43%)</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table><br><table border="1" data-bbox="788 392 1995 603"> <thead> <tr> <th>Measure</th> <th>Sept to Dec 2020</th> <th>Jan to July 2021</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Fixed term exclusion rate (all students)</td> <td>9.25%</td> <td>1.57%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fixed term exclusion rate (PP only)</td> <td>10.94%</td> <td>1.89%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>  | Measure          | 2017/18       | 2018/19   | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | Permanent exclusions rate (National average) | 1.21% (0.10%) | 0.62% (0.10%) | 0.19% (0.06%) | 0.39% (-) | Fixed term exclusion rate (National average) | 12.53% (10.13%) | 15.15% (10.75%) | 9.71% (7.43%) |  | Measure | Sept to Dec 2020 | Jan to July 2021 | Fixed term exclusion rate (all students) | 9.25% | 1.57% | Fixed term exclusion rate (PP only) | 10.94% | 1.89% |
|---|--|------------------|---------------|-----------|---------|---------|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|--|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|--|---------|------------------|------------------|--|-------|-------|-------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Measure   | 2017/18  | 2018/19          | 2019/20       | 2020/21   |         |         |  |               |               |               |           |  |                 |                 |               |  |         |                  |                  |  |       |       |                                     |        |       |
| Permanent exclusions rate (National average)  | 1.21% (0.10%)  | 0.62% (0.10%)    | 0.19% (0.06%) | 0.39% (-) |         |         |  |               |               |               |           |  |                 |                 |               |  |         |                  |                  |  |       |       |                                     |        |       |
| Fixed term exclusion rate (National average)  | 12.53% (10.13%)  | 15.15% (10.75%)  | 9.71% (7.43%) |           |         |         |  |               |               |               |           |  |                 |                 |               |  |         |                  |                  |  |       |       |                                     |        |       |
| Measure   | Sept to Dec 2020   | Jan to July 2021 |               |           |         |         |  |               |               |               |           |  |                 |                 |               |  |         |                  |                  |  |       |       |                                     |        |       |
| Fixed term exclusion rate (all students)  | 9.25%  | 1.57%            |               |           |         |         |  |               |               |               |           |  |                 |                 |               |  |         |                  |                  |  |       |       |                                     |        |       |
| Fixed term exclusion rate (PP only)   | 10.94%   | 1.89%            |               |           |         |         |  |               |               |               |           |  |                 |                 |               |  |         |                  |                  |  |       |       |                                     |        |       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of Gatsby 8 benchmarks to improve careers provision</li> </ul>   | <p>Gatsby benchmark completion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 82%: Stable programme (7 year plan using compass tool to monitor progress)</li> <li>2. 100%: Learning from career market (engage with Future First)</li> <li>3. 90%: Addressing needs of individuals (aspirational events for disadvantaged students; SEND students supported to make positive choices &amp; gain experience of provision at next stage)</li> <li>4. 100%: Link learning to careers (Careers Champions in each department to embed context in lessons)</li> <li>5. 100%: Encounters with employers (links with local and other businesses to support subject-specific intervention and advice)</li> <li>6. 87%: Experiences of workplaces (excursions and visitors)</li> <li>7. 87%: Encounters with further &amp; higher education (Brilliant Club; Insight Programme; visits to post-16 and post-18 centres)</li> <li>8. 100%: Personal guidance (1:1 meetings before Pathways process in Year 9; impartial advice provided to all Year 11 students &amp; families; structured support to prepare Year 13 students for university or career applications)</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% of students with an EHCP entered further education in 2020</li> <li>• 4% increase in students remaining in full time education to 92.5% post-16 (above regional average)</li> </ul> |                  |               |           |         |         |  |               |               |               |           |  |                 |                 |               |  |         |                  |                  |  |       |       |                                     |        |       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All subjects offer every student at least one opportunity to learn outside the school each year</li> <li>• Varied extra-curricular provision</li> <li>• Late buses introduced at cost to DMA to allow more students to access clubs</li> <li>• Inclusive student leadership team elected through democratic process</li> <li>• Investment in the school canteen and social time facilities</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2019/20, 75% of students experience at least one trip from school; 71% of PP students and 72% of SEND students</li> <li>• 100% of students will experience a school trip in 2021/22</li> <li>• 38 clubs on offer each week</li> <li>• 40% of students regularly attend extracurricular clubs with PP and SEND student proportions being representative of the cohort</li> <li>• DoE programme offered at Bronze, Silver &amp; Gold levels: all year 10 students currently working towards bronze award</li> <li>• 92% of students are happy in school</li> </ul>   |                  |               |           |         |         |  |               |               |               |           |  |                 |                 |               |  |         |                  |                  |  |       |       |                                     |        |       |

# 16 to 19 provision at Athena Sixth Form College

## Intent

Local students have a high-quality, local option for continuing education after KS4. Teaching and learning will follow the same principles for active engagement and retention of knowledge. Students will leave Athena with excellent academic qualifications and other life skills that will enable them to take more responsibility for themselves in higher education or employment.

## Implementation

- Improved curriculum offer, including new vocational opportunities
- Structured guidance for post-18 options
- Support for disadvantaged students with dedicated bursary
- Investment in buildings and facilities
- Personal development sessions include PSHE and wellbeing
- Work experience encouraged for all students
- Experienced student executive leading events

## Impact

- Overall performance of students at the Sixth Form has improved from C- in 2017 to B+ in 2021 (including vocational subjects)
- Average A level grade improved to strong C for the first time in the College's history
- Student outcomes are above national average
- Students are more aspirational and confident to apply to university:
  - 84% of students applied to university (vs. 39% in Norfolk average)
  - 50% of students applied to Russell Group institutions (vs. 29% in Norfolk average)
  - 13% of students have applied to Oxford or Cambridge University (vs. 6% in Norfolk average)
  - In 2021 90% of students went to University (up from 60% in 2019)
- From 2020 to 2021, 92% of students remained on courses from year 12 into 13 (increased from just 69% two years previous)