

World Class Curriculum Accreditation

School name:	The Mildenhall College Academy
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Commissioned by:	Principal - Susan Byles Vice Principal - Kevin Ward
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Accreditation Team:	
	David Peck
	Linda Peck
	Vikki Pendry

Accreditation date(s):	22 nd September 2016
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Accreditation activities

- Walk around the Academy's two sites and visits to classrooms accompanied by the Vice Principal and the Director of Sixth Form
- Observation of a house assembly
- Meetings with the Principal, Vice Principal, a member of the governing body, senior and middle leaders
- Informal discussions with staff and students in lessons and structured interviews with small groups of students from all key stages
- Showcasing of history and computer science projects and presentations of individual work from a small number of students
- Review of the Academy website and documentation: previous inspection report, newsletters, curriculum policy and curriculum related documents including schemes of work
- Brief verbal feedback to the Vice Principal at the end of the day



The Curriculum Foundation is delighted to award **Mildenhall College Academy** with the **World Class Curriculum Mark** for the following reasons:

Values, aims and principles

The Academy undoubtedly places students at the heart of learning. The curriculum is flexible, responsive and highly personalised which means that the needs of every learner are carefully considered at the beginning of and during each key stage. Students interviewed speak enthusiastically about the positive culture and climate for learning. Catch up programmes are in place for students who have fallen behind with their learning. Well-considered schemes to improve students' social skills such as Suffolk Access Champion and the mini fire break course with a former fire-fighter and governor are valued by students. A sixth form student commented, "In my previous school I was a statistic; here I'm an individual".

Students and staff are able to articulate the school's values when prompted and these go beyond the declared values of honesty, sincerity and personal responsibility stated in the Academy's policy. The 'Fundamental British Values' statement on the website and around school is a central focus of the school's work and students have clearly bought into this. They feel well prepared as future citizens and told us that 'it is very easy to be different here'. Maxims and vehicles such as 'thought for the week' are used to convey the academy's core belief that everyone can achieve through endeavour. These are evident around the site and used in assemblies.

There is a good mix of timetabled lessons, mini and extended projects, visits, trips, productions, and engagement in charity and community work which ensure all learners have regular access to a varied range of exciting and interesting experiences to support their intellectual, physical, emotional, social, scientific, aesthetic and creative development. There are strong links with primary schools whose pupils come into school to experience exciting activities including drama and drumming. Independence of mind is encouraged and there was evidence of students bringing their own ideas to lessons in several classrooms. Students have opportunities to work alone, in pairs and in different horizontal and vertical groupings. Most learning seen on the day was interactive and students clearly enjoy school.

Curriculum policy is reviewed annually. Fewer aims and more clearly defined values and principles would enable the Academy to more easily measure the impact of the curriculum in this domain.

Key competences for learning and life

Although there is no defined set of competencies in the curriculum policy documents seen, students do have some understanding of how they are developing skills in one area that can be applied in another. They talk with maturity about developing good learning habits for life. Completing homework on time and to a good standard is a key focus for the Academy and teachers and leaders suffer 'institutional pain' to ensure this expectation is met. Employability skills are tracked and accredited from Y7 to Y13. There are many opportunities for students to take on leadership roles as tutor, house, subject and sports leaders and prefects. The sixth form routinely work alongside or mentor younger students and benefit from close contact with neighbouring businesses and universities. Students certainly feel they are in control of their lives and all students spoken to about future destinations were keen to

continue studying or training in work. Some have considered the possibility of study abroad.

Students are encouraged to take part in a rich extra-curricular programme: Activities offered every lunchtime and at the end of most days include a full range of sports and arts, as well as other recreational activities, some more academic subjects and some more unusual ones such as astronomy and a capella. Homework clubs and catch-up clinics are available every day. Students really appreciate these additional activities, explaining how they have helped in developing their confidence and communication skills whilst trying out new areas of learning. Regular, well-attended public speaking, presentation and debating competitions and events are organised in the school's octagon and elsewhere.

The Academy provides many opportunities for students to be creative and to excel. There is an emphasis on reward and affirmation. Rewards or 'Ace' points are given for excellence in any area. Sixth form apply for offices, which are allocated at the end of Y12 on the basis of successful completion of the year. Recognition of their talents through the student leadership structure provides scope for learners to develop as independent young leaders of the future. Individuals who presented their art, music and writing to the team did so with confidence and grace. One student in Y7 said, "We are nurtured and given opportunities to explore and experiment". Sixth form students working on their extended projects spoke with authority about their chosen and very distinctive topics.

Whole school approaches to develop student resilience such as 'C3B4Me' ensure students become increasingly independent as they move through the Academy. The sixth form spoke about the ease of transition from KS4 to KS5. Students are involved in self and peer assessment and personal learning checklists are created with them in all subjects to ensure they are clear about how to improve. School mentors and those from the nearby RAF and USAF bases work with identified young people on carefully tailored personal improvement plans.

Leaders report that regular student voice activities provide good evidence of learners developing key competences, though defining these more precisely from the outset would give the academy a clearer picture of its strengths and weaknesses in this area.

The world's major branches of learning

The curriculum is inclusive and includes all national curriculum subjects and a wider range of vocational and academic subjects from KS4. Students with SEND are able to take entry-level qualifications. Effective partnerships with West Suffolk College and the British Racing School mean the academy can expand its KS4 offer to include NVQ, BTEC and CITB vocational courses. The KS5 curriculum is designed to ensure the majority of students' aptitudes, interests and aspirations are well catered for. Display on both sites celebrates the full range of disciplines.

The small sample of schemes of learning seen covers the requirements of the new curriculum and indicate a focus on core and enhanced knowledge and skills. Conversations with middle leaders indicate good knowledge of national subject reforms and research. 'Let's think in English' is used to develop students' response

and analytical skills. Teams of teachers work together to reinforce students' understanding of the inter-connections between subjects. For example, an identified gap in learning has led to English teachers working alongside the science and DT teams to improve students' writing skills. An unforeseen benefit of this was that the English team were able to use the DT team's focus on precision in practical work to improve the quality of writing in English.

The linking of current and past events to learning across the Academy is strong. Examples of this were seen in many subjects in all key stages. Highly skilled teachers were observed making learning challenging and real in subjects including maths, science, criminology, music, sport studies and life skills. It is remarkable that four teachers at the school have gained national recognition for their practice. Previous and current projects in, for example history, involve students working with schools and organisations in the UK and abroad to develop their inter-cultural understanding and to commemorate global events such as the WW1 Christmas Truce. Students from the Academy worked alongside their German peers with their history and DT teachers to build a beautiful and very moving memorial, which takes pride of place in Messines in Belgium. Video conferencing is also used to develop this deep lasting learning. The Academy is proactive in selecting opportunities for young people to learn about and re-enact experiences of different generations. Examples of this include the trip to Paderborn, to Talbot House in Ypres and to a local old people's home to create memory packs. Students remember these and other experiences without prompting.

High quality guidance helps learners to make informed choices about which subjects to study at key transition points and in the future.

Community, local, national and global contexts

The Academy works with the community to enrich the learning of students. Many memorable activities and events are delivered with community groups, charities, universities, local businesses and international organisations such as USAF. The school took part in the Lego robots competition, which involved building robots and demonstrating Lego's company values. The team was awarded best newcomer. Local business mentors advise older students on employability and how to conduct themselves in interviews. Parents are regular visitors to open days, productions and presentations. The 'GO 4 schools' real-time assessment data ensures parents are kept up to date with their child's progress and can support their learning.

The Principal recognises the need to broaden the horizons of students who live in rural Mildenhall and the surrounding villages. The Academy has taken students on a number of residential trips and visits which have been well attended as well as encouraging students to host visitors from other countries. Links stretch beyond Europe and have included China, Jordan and Rwanda.

The majority of students at Mildenhall are from a white British background with very few minority ethnic groups represented. Awareness of linguistic diversity of the school has been raised through encouraging students with EAL to act as interpreters. Bi-lingual students are able to enter examinations in their home language.

Contemporary issues as well as the big ideas that have shaped the world are built into the curriculum. The comprehensive PHSE, citizenship and 'Skills for Life' programme includes partnership working with a number of local experts and ensures that current affairs are high on the agenda and that materials are up to date. Learners are exposed to important issues that may touch their lives such as mental health, healthy relationships, e-safety and others that they might not normally encounter. As child mental health is a current concern to many schools, MCA could help to spread good practice by sharing its innovative approach. Assemblies are used to focus on Academy culture and current affairs.

Conclusion

Learning observed and evidence gathered from students and leaders on the day demonstrate that the curriculum has a strong impact on progress in the broadest sense. Learners are typically articulate, confident, considerate of each other, thoughtful in their conversations, extremely keen to learn and well prepared for the next stage in their education. Outcomes are improving and the Academy predicts a strong trajectory over the coming years. A high percentage of students leaving year 13 are the first in their family to progress to university.

The commitment of the Principal and her leadership team to providing learners with a high quality curriculum and a truly rounded education is manifest. There is a wealth of evidence of performance relating to all ten of the WCC principles.

Only two areas for development have been identified: sharpening the curriculum policy which is also linked to the second, the challenging issue of monitoring and evaluation of learners' progress in relation to the development of values and competences. The Academy may want to consider involving stakeholders, including students, in this process.

The Curriculum Foundation congratulates **Mildenhall College Academy** on achieving **The World Class Curriculum Mark** for best practice across the school.