

We speak to the headteacher of Forest Academy in Hainault about the special atmosphere and feature two success stories at the school



■ The school in Harbourn Road, Hainault

# Pupils flourish at community focused school

Headteacher Will Thompson recognises hard work of staff, pupils and governors

When Will Thompson was offered the opportunity to become headteacher of The Forest Academy in 2010, it didn't take long for him to make his decision.

"What I saw back in 2010 was potential," he says. "The school had fantastic students who wanted to achieve and had clear ideas about their futures. The staff were enthusiastic, full of ideas and creativity."

There is a very special atmosphere at The Forest Academy Mr Thompson explains.

"We are essentially a community school," he says. "We take our role within the community extremely seriously. We realise that we have the opportunity to shape the lives of the young people



“We realise that we have the opportunity to shape the lives of the young people who come to our school

Headteacher Will Thompson

who come to our school."

Partnerships are an important focus the school, whether it's between the teachers and students, the school and the parents, or the school and the community.

"This is something that is very real here and is something that many visitors comment upon when they visit the school," adds Mr Thompson.

"Being part of BMAT, The Beal Multi Academy Trust, means that the partnership with Beal is permanent and an invaluable link for TFA."

Under Mr Thompson's leadership the school has gone from strength to strength. The sixth form has grown significantly, with the majority of students going on to study at university.



■ Forest Academy pupils want to achieve and have clear ideas about their future

The journey the school has been on was recognised by Ofsted in September 2013, when it was judged 'good' in all areas.

Mr Thompson said: "The Ofsted judgement was a vindication of the hard work and dedication of governors, staff, parents and students. We all wanted a school that we could be proud of and we are pleased that the improvements we have made have been recognised."

He urged people to come and look for themselves.

"We have an Open Evening on September 23 which all welcome to attend," he says "but I will be happy to show you around the school at any time you wish so you can see for yourself what our school is really like."



■ The school was graded 'good' in the latest Ofsted report





Pictures: Steve Poston



## Former pupil gains place at top university

### Maithrayi credits academy's quality advice and guidance

As Maithrayi Kuruparan takes her place at King's College, London, later this month, her time at The Forest Academy will be at the forefront of her mind.

Maithrayi achieved Bs in geography and maths and an A\* in sociology to gain a place at the prestigious university, which is considered to be one of the best in the country.

Maithrayi was a hard working student but understands the school played a big part in helping her to achieve her goals.

She said: "Being a sixth form student at The Forest Academy enabled me to reach my goal. The advice and guidance that I received made me believe that I could go to a top university.

"The teachers really encouraged me. They would accept nothing but my best and would be happy to spend many hours after school explaining and helping me with my work."

Maithrayi is one of many former Forest Academy students who will be taking up university places this autumn. The Academy's sixth form is extremely popular with both students from the school and those outside.

One student added: "I heard about all the help and support the students were getting here and saw the universities they were applying to. This is why I came here as my dream is to go to a really good university and I know the teachers here will help me do that."

#### Making the change

Changing from primary to secondary school can be a daunting time for many young people and their parents.

At The Forest Academy special care and attention is given to make sure this process goes as smoothly as possible.

Early in the summer term, staff from The Forest Academy begin to visit those who will be attending the school in their primary schools, meaning there will be a friendly, welcoming face when they arrive at the school in September.

All students who transfer to The Forest Academy are invited to a 'taster day' in July. The purpose of this is to familiarise students with the school, to make friends and to see what secondary school life would be like.

One Year 7 student said: "I was very nervous before the taster day, but that didn't last long. Older students were there to answer my questions and show me where things were.

"The canteen was the best thing because the food is great. It was easy when I started in September because I knew how everything worked."



■ Pupils can learn vocational subjects, including construction

## Dedicated 'Teacher of the Year' heads up school's staff training and development

Not many schools can boast about having an award winning teacher on their staff, but The Forest Academy can do just that; in 2013 Cecilia Chantaduc, a French teacher at the school, won the prestigious South East teacher of the year award.

Ms Chantaduc went through a rigorous selection procedure to secure the accolade after being nominated by parents, staff and students.

She is now an assistant headteacher at the school and her role involves co-ordinating training for new

teachers throughout the Academy.

Headteacher, Mr Thompson, said: "I am very pleased that Cecilia has won this award. This is recognition for years of dedicated service to the students in this school, who have benefited enormously from Cecilia's teaching.

"It makes sense that Cecilia is heavily involved in our staff training and development. Cecilia has set the bench mark for our staff and has shown what is possible."

The Forest Academy, part of the Beal Multi-Academy

Trust (BMAT) and the North East London Training Alliance (NELTA) is now an accredited teacher trainer. This means the school can award qualified teacher status.

Mr Thompson added: "Being part of both BMAT and NELTA is hugely beneficial for our staff and students.

"There are lots of opportunities that are afforded as a result of this, but we are particularly pleased to be able to train and develop staff and with Cecilia overseeing this, we are confident that few schools can match the quality of our staff."