

Serco Inspections
Boundary House
2 Wythall Green Way
Middle Lane
BIRMINGHAM
West Midlands
B47 6LW

OFSTED
T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

SERCO
Direct T 0121 683 2888

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Mr Cannon
Principal
Harris Boys' Academy East Dulwich
Peckham Rye
East Dulwich
London SE22 0AT

Dear Mr Cannon

Academies initiative: monitoring inspection of Harris Boys' Academy East Dulwich

Introduction

Following my visit with Daniel Towl HMI to your academy on 1 and 2 December 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a first monitoring inspection in connection with the academies initiative.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal and other senior leaders. They also met with groups of staff and the chief executive officer of the Harris Federation of South London Schools, who is also a member of the governing body. Inspectors talked with students in lessons and at break times and met with student members of the academy's learning commission.

Context

This academy opened as a brand new Academy in September 2009 for students in Year 7. It operated in temporary accommodation for the first year. In September 2010, the move to a new building was completed. The academy now has 297 students in Years 7 and 8. It also has eight sixth form students who receive all of their education in the nearby Harris Girls' Academy. Provision and outcomes for these eight students were not explored on this visit. From September 2011, this academy plans to set up provision for sixth form students, within the federation of Harris Academies. With the

doubling of student numbers in September, staffing levels have increased accordingly. There are currently nine newly qualified teachers accounting for roughly a third of all teachers. Senior leaders are currently seeking to fill for January 2011 vacancies in some subjects. The academy has a specialism in sport and enterprise.

Students come from many different backgrounds. The main groups are White British, Black Caribbean and Black African at roughly a fifth each. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than average; few students have a statement of special educational needs. Many students speak English as an additional language but not at an early stage. About a third of students are known to be eligible for free school meals.

Students' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The academy is working successfully to raise students' attainment. It has set high expectations of students' attitudes and achievement. Students rise to them within an ethos of achieving a 'personal best' and with a 'can do' attitude to work and learning, underpinned well by the academy's specialisms in sport and enterprise. Students are proud of their school and enjoy what it offers.

Students' attainment on entry into the academy is wide ranging. The proportions of students who reached expected levels or above in English and mathematics in their end of Year 6 tests, prior to admission, were broadly average. The proportions exceeding them were much lower, especially in English. Standards in Year 8 are broadly average.

Students generally made good progress in the last academic year, especially in reading. They are continuing to make good progress in the main, with some examples of outstanding progress. This is because the educational provision has many good features, even though the quality of teaching is still a little uneven in places. In particular, progress in English and mathematics has been good because such a close check is kept on it and extra support or intervention provided where necessary. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Progress in the first year of the academy's existence was impeded in some subjects by temporary shortcomings in resources or facilities. These were in art, Spanish, technology and science, and have been very largely rectified.

The academy's drive to improve students' skills in literacy and numeracy is bearing fruit because students are generally encouraged to use and develop these skills in work across the curriculum. However, more can be done here. Some students have gained already a nationally recognised accreditation for basic skills. Students are growing in their confidence in speaking. They feel safe to express their opinions and suggest ideas. They enjoy reading. They embark readily on writing tasks but the quality of writing is still too variable in its accuracy, construction, creativity and general presentation. Good polished written work exists but there is still not enough of

it. In mathematics, students usually grasp well key concepts and technical skills but these are not yet being applied frequently in relevant and wide-ranging contexts. Students speak of their considerable enjoyment of sport and practical subjects, including art, music and food technology. Systems for keeping a check on students' attainment and progress are very effective and are being used well to raise standards.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Students are polite, helpful and they look smart. Behaviour is generally good. Students understand and respond positively to the systems of rewards and sanctions. In the vast majority of lessons, students arrive promptly, display good attitudes to learning, work hard and maintain their concentration well. Occasionally, some relative weaknesses exist in behaviour linked to the quality of teaching. Students are growing in their confidence and self-esteem because the academy encourages them to have belief in themselves and in what they can achieve. Students are clear about their targets for learning. The academy is also effective in helping students to adopt healthy lifestyles. The atmosphere in the dining room is calm and pleasant. Attendance is high and reveals the extent of students' engagement and enjoyment. Through the academy's learning commission, and in other ways, students express their views and contribute to improvements, especially in the quality of teaching and learning.

The effectiveness of provision

Provision has some good features. The strongest aspects are in: the increasing personalisation of the curriculum to meet students' individual needs, especially for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities; the close check that is kept on students' attainment and progress; and in the suitably broad curriculum that promotes the development of key skills, especially literacy, and creative abilities. In addition, the curriculum supports greatly students' personal development through such work as that on enterprise and leadership schemes; sport plays a very significant role. The large investment in information and communication technology is enabling students to be adept in its use. The space and facilities are attractive and of a high quality although outside recreational space, while adequate for the current number of students, is limited on the site. The academy makes use of other sports facilities and transports students to it by coach.

In just over half of the 21 lessons seen on this visit teaching was good or better, including three where it was outstanding. Elsewhere, teaching was mostly satisfactory. Lessons are generally well planned so as to build upon students' prior learning through engaging activities. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Relationships are positive. In a few lessons seen, the teacher did not establish clearly enough what students understood at the start of or during the lesson and the tasks set did not meet their needs. Occasionally, some weaknesses in behaviour marred progress and not enough was achieved. In the best lessons, teachers set out the aims crisply and

move students' learning on at a great pace, often with much fun as well as regular checks on progress. In such lessons, teachers use language well to extend students' vocabulary, employ good questioning skills, make good links with literacy and numeracy and help students appreciate what has been learned through good strategies for assessment. Encouragement and rewards are used well. In some lessons where teaching and learning were satisfactory rather than good, overlong introductions reduced the time students could spend on acquiring new knowledge, skills and understanding, or tasks set were generally undemanding. Marking of work is varied; good marking exists but there are places where marking is very cursory or does not pick up errors. Some teachers model good handwriting.

Systems for keeping a check on the well-being of students are very thorough. Work to ensure high attendance is very effective. Transition arrangements for students as they move from Year 6 to Year 7 are of high quality with examples of exceptionally good personal support. The academy senior staff are right in reviewing arrangements for internal exclusion to make sure time is used well when students work in the seclusion room. Partnerships within the federation and with some other agencies are effective in providing personal support and advice to students. Very thorough procedures exist for safeguarding students. Supervision around the academy is excellent; it is ever-present but not obtrusive. Most risk assessments are in place but some relating to use of the building and for departmental activities are not yet complete. Plans exist to complete this work.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

It is right to pay tribute to the leaders and managers for reaching quickly a point in this new academy's development at which students are enjoying their learning and making good progress in a calm, secure and new environment. Much has been achieved in just over a year. Managers are rightly exploring what the future numbers of students should be in view of the small site. The commitment to ensuring students make at least good progress in both academic and personal development is palpable and runs through all endeavours. The school improvement plan is entirely appropriate and progress on it is clear to see. Middle leaders are impressive in the extent to which they have a sense of responsibility not just for their own subject areas but for academy-wide developments. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate, especially in relation to the quality of teaching and learning. The leadership and management of teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers have, where necessary, personalised improvement plans. Staff new to the school are very well supported. The academy has several effective ways of seeking students' and parents' views. The academy's capacity to improve further is outstanding.

External support

The academy benefits from and values greatly the support and advice received from the federation of Harris academies. The federation played a vital part in the creation

of the new building. It contributes greatly in matters such as finance and human resources. Staff appreciate the support of educational consultants from the Harris federation and elsewhere. They speak positively about the professional development events run by the federation. The school improvement partner makes a good contribution through her support, challenge and accurate evaluations.

Main Judgements

The academy has made good progress towards raising standards.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and ensure none is inadequate by:
 - developing, where necessary, teachers' skills in indentifying what students know and understand before, during and after a lesson so that their skills and knowledge are built upon securely through appropriately challenging and engaging tasks
 - making the best use of time so that students' active learning is maximised while also ensuring that they have clarity of purpose in their work.
- Raise further students' skills in literacy and numeracy by:
 - giving students more opportunities and reasons across the curriculum to polish their writing to a 'personal best'
 - ensuring students have regular opportunities to use numeracy skills in relevant, real-life contexts in mathematics lessons and also in other subjects.
- Complete all necessary risk assessments, as planned, by the end of January 2011.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Group at the Department for Education. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Wiola Hola

Her Majesty's Inspector

cc Paul Clifford, Chair of the Governing Body
The Academies Group, DfE [Paul.hann@education.gsi.gov.uk]