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12 March 2012

Dr Sue Demont  
Principal  
Hampton Academy  
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Hampton  
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Dear Dr Demont

## **Academies initiative: monitoring inspection of Hampton Academy**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Peter Gale HMI to your academy on 8 and 9 March 2012, 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 and scrutinised documents. They also met with the Chief Executive, who represents the sponsor, three groups of students, members of staff and a number of senior leaders.

### **Context**

Hampton Academy was established in September 2010 as one of the first two academies to be opened and managed in the United Kingdom by the Learning Schools Trust. The Trust is sponsored by Kunskapsskolan, a Swedish educational organisation. Hampton Academy is co-sponsored by Richmond Local Authority. The academy uses a small school model and is organised into three colleges: two in the lower school for students in Years 7 to 9 and the third for those in Years 10 and 11. Each college operates with its own director, administrators and pastoral and academic staff. Their specific responsibilities reflect the overarching leadership and management structure of the academy. The academy has two specialisms, which are

performing arts and communication, including English, media and information and communication technology.

The vast majority of staff transferred from the predecessor school. All key appointments of senior and middle leaders have been made with the exception of a programme leader for mathematics.

The academy has the capacity for approximately 1,050 students, including those in the sixth form, which will open in September 2012. Currently, the academy is a smaller than average secondary school with 795 students on roll. The academy serves a diverse range of students from different heritages. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. The largest groups are of White British heritage followed by those from Eastern European backgrounds and those from any other Asian background, Indian and African heritages. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above average but few are at an early stage of learning the language. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above average, but the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Prior to the opening of the academy, between 20% and 30% of students in the previous Year 11 who left in 2011, joined or left the predecessor school other than at the usual times. The level of student mobility is currently stable. The improved reputation of the academy in the local community has meant that it is increasingly selected as a first choice school. The new build is due to be completed in 2013.

### **Achievement of pupils at the academy**

Attainment of students has improved since the formation of the academy. Currently, attainment is average and students are making satisfactory progress based on their starting points. In 2011, the proportion of students obtaining five or more A\* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, was lower than the national average. While students attained average results in English, the overall GCSE results masked weaknesses in mathematics, primarily as difficulties in recruiting experienced mathematics specialists affected outcomes. Attainment in mathematics was below expectations, particularly for White British students and those who are not eligible for free school meals. Although the more-able students did not meet expectations in English, boys made better progress than girls in this subject. The academy is successfully using a good range of literacy and numeracy strategies and other approaches to close the attainment gap of all students with special educational needs and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals with the national average. For example, in 2011, students with a statement of special educational needs, those supported at school action plus and the very few from any other Asian background made notably good progress. Students from other white backgrounds and other minority ethnic groups generally make better progress than the average for their group nationally.

In lessons seen, the progress made by students was satisfactory overall, with much that was good. Progress over time is improving, particularly in the lower colleges, in Years 7 and 8, where students have had more exposure to personalised teaching and learning. However, there is variability in the rate of progress that groups make. For example, in Year 9, students with special educational needs and those known to be eligible for free school meals are not progressing as well as expected.

Assessment data are analysed rigorously. The very recent examination results indicate GCSE results are expected to improve because a minority of students have successfully achieved GCSE grades B or C in maths and English based on the early entry. Targeted support is in place for all groups of students.

### **The quality of teaching**

All the teaching observed was at least satisfactory with an increasing proportion of good teaching. Much is being done to improve the quality of teaching and good or outstanding practice is beginning to be shared across the academy. In all lessons observed, relationships between students and staff were good.

Effective teaching had a number of characteristics that contributed to students making good and occasionally outstanding progress. Teachers' expectations of work and behaviour were high and students were fully challenged and motivated to succeed. Well-structured planning underpinned these lessons, as starter activities and the main task built on students' grasp of the work, allowing learning to flow well, as seen in, for example, mathematics. Practical approaches, including group work and feedback, were skilfully used to extend and meet the needs of all students and involve them in their learning. Learning was at its best when teachers asked questions to probe students' understanding and assessment information on their attainment and progress was used to inform planning.

Where teaching was satisfactory, tasks were not adapted to meet the needs of all students. Teachers' expectations were not explained clearly, questions were not targeted to reflect the different ability groups in the class and students were not given enough time to think. As a result, students could not always explain what they were learning. In these lessons, teachers did not use talk effectively to involve students in their learning; assessment criteria were not used well to support learning so that students could apply guidance from marking to their work; there was little use of peer assessment; and cross-curricular skills were not emphasised. Although no inadequate teaching was observed, in a few lessons expectations of behaviour were not high and low-level chatter distracted students from their tasks. In such lessons, teachers lacked the skills to engage students consistently. In other lessons, girls were passive learners.

The quality of marking is not consistent. Where it is good, such as in languages, teachers use formative comments and follow up in relation to spelling, punctuation and grammar. These comments contribute to students knowing how they can

improve their work. Although there is care and attention to marking end-of-unit assessments, day-to-day marking is infrequent. Discussions with students indicate that they would like to have more of their work marked, with clear comments on how they can improve.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour in and around the academy is good but in lessons, it is most often satisfactory and linked closely to the quality of teaching. Students are proud to belong to the academy and say they are 'really safe and happy'. Despite the extensive building works, students are considerate when moving around and using the limited space available.

Students feel that the discipline is strict but also think that behaviour could be better in lessons if the rules were applied consistently. In effective lessons, students' behaviour was good and occasionally outstanding. Generally, the vast majority of students are polite in lessons and follow instructions but the extent of their engagement is dependent on the degree to which teachers are explicit about their expectations of work and behaviour. The academy has robust systems to deal with unacceptable behaviour, whether on or off site. This has meant that fixed-term exclusions are currently high as the behaviour management process is applied without compromising the rules. However, the quality of care for students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and for those with challenging behaviour is very strong. Highly effective multi-agency partnership work is used very well to meet the needs of students and support them to focus on their education.

Bullying is very rare and students feel that the different forms of discriminatory behaviour do not apply to the academy. The warm and positive relationships between different groups of students are a strength of the academy's work, which both parents and carers and students like.

Attendance is average and improving primarily because the academy uses stringent actions to pursue the few persistent absentees. Punctuality to the academy is good and so, generally, is punctuality to lessons. The opportunities for students' voices to be heard are well developed through representatives on the governing body and the school council.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the academy**

The leadership and management of the academy benefit from the well-established experience of the Principal and the Learning Schools Trust structure, in particular the support from the Chief Executive and the Executive Team (comprising the Principals of the Learning Schools Trust academies) as well as the Academy Council. A cohesive and experienced senior team surrounds the Principal and all are effectively driving forward improvements. The clarity of vision and the skilful approach to leading staff through the complexities of innovative change have meant that the Principal and the Learning Schools Trust have won the loyalty and commitment of

staff, parents, carers and students. There is a mature understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. Despite the ongoing construction of the new build, the leaders and managers have been unremitting in establishing the approach to learning without all the technology and space required for the operation of the learning concept. This is leadership at its best in relation to communicating a shared vision about the future, which all understand and are working towards, despite continuing obstacles.

The Principal uses a coordinated approach to develop the distinguishing features of the academy. Effective management systems are established across the three colleges. Responsibilities are clear and a detailed development plan provides staff with a clear overview of the journey the academy is undertaking to raise standards and enable every student to fulfil the mantra. For example, senior leaders have set challenging targets for the current academic year with a strong focus on improving teaching, literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. Since the start of the current academic year, partnership work with St Mary's University, intensive and regular professional development, links with local partner schools, coaching and mentoring have all been used to improve teaching further.

The few parents, carers and students spoken to are excited about the potential of a personalised curriculum and 'Steps' as a means to challenge learners of all abilities to take control of their learning. Parents and carers and students make use of the assessment process to monitor achievement over time. Independence, self-determination and confidence underpin the way in which the academy is gradually developing students' skills to tackle their learning. The academy has robust monitoring systems for all areas of provision and uses its evaluation schedule and data to ensure that all students have equal access to the provision and support. This highly effective approach to monitoring and evaluating has resulted in targeted support for students in difficult circumstances; those requiring additional intensive literacy and numeracy; and girls, who are not all performing as well as boys. Accountability is established, as is performance management. The Academy Council participates in reviews and provides challenge. It is keen to increase the level of challenge through monitoring visits. Procedures to ensure that students are safe are robust.

The academy's specialisms, in particular performing arts, are contributing positively to very strong partnership work in the community, including schools, theatres and high arts. Although the specialisms are integral to curriculum development and cross-curricular working, the monitoring visit found no evidence to indicate that they were having a strong impact in classrooms visited. Information and communication technology is less well developed; in part because of the building works.

### **External support**

The academy benefits from the support it receives from the Learning Schools Trust. The Trust is responsible for managing and supporting the key operational functions of the academy. The Chief Executive works closely with the Executive Principal.

Regular visits from the School Improvement Partner, internal and commissioned reviews and the use of contracted consultants have contributed to leaders and managers using evaluative reports to improve provision. Support from within the Trust has also been used to develop the curriculum.

### **Main Judgements**

The academy has made satisfactory progress towards raising standards.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure that teaching is at least good and accelerates students' achievement by ensuring that planning meets their needs and expectations of work are consistently high.
- Reduce the level of low-level disruption in lessons so that students' progress is not compromised.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, The Executive Chair of the Learning Schools Trust, and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**