



3 February 2006

Mr Fred Groom  
Principal  
Stockley Academy  
Park View Road  
Hillingdon  
Middlesex  
UB8 3GA

Dear Mr Groom

## **ACADEMIES INITIATIVE: MONITORING VISIT TO STOCKLEY ACADEMY**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Linda McGill HMI to your academy on 25 and 26 January 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

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

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### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal, the vice principal, nominated staff and the chair of governors.

### **Context**

Stockley Academy opened in September 2004, replacing Evelyns Community School, the buildings of which were used until the summer holiday 2005, when the academy moved into the new accommodation. Some external sports and recreational facilities have yet to be handed over to the academy and are due to be ready later this year. The academy's students are aged between 11 and 19; it is oversubscribed, with the result that the numbers in Year 7 are similar to the combined total for Years 10 and 11. The current staffing position is stable in that the teaching staff is almost entirely

composed of permanent postholders. However, the academy is seeking to make substantive appointments to the key roles of a second vice principal and director for technology, one of the subjects in which it specialises. There are more girls than boys on the roll, with the most significant imbalance in Year 9. The academy serves a part of west London in which there are areas of social disadvantage and the proportion of students entitled to free school meals is very high. The percentage of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average and overall attainment on entry is below average. Over 70% of the academy population are of white British heritage and there is a significant number of students from Traveller families. The proportion of students for whom English is an additional language is well above average.

### **Achievement and standards**

In 2005, attainment in the Key Stage 3 national tests and in the GCSE examinations was well below the national average. The results of the Key Stage 3 tests were very close to the academy targets. In the GCSE, the target for five or more A\*- C grades was missed; however the targets for five or more A\*-G grades, and one or more overall passes were met and, in the latter case, exceeded. The academy has been open only since September 2004 and has therefore only one year's test and examination results available. Academy staff have analysed carefully the 2005 results to identify trends over time but in doing so, they have of necessity used performance data from the predecessor school, in which an improving trend was evident. Nevertheless the academy's assessment data indicate that there is some underachievement among lower attaining boys of white British heritage, the more able and the students not entitled to take free school meals. The students for whom English is an additional language generally make better progress than other groups. In the GCSE in 2005, the performance of the cohort in subjects other than English and mathematics was below expectations.

The academy has introduced a range of appropriate measures aimed at raising attainment in the examinations in the summer of 2006. Staff are working in partnership with the London Challenge initiative to raise the attainment of a targeted group of students, providing mentoring and extra classes outside timetabled lessons. A focus on coursework has resulted in its been handed in more promptly than last year, leaving staff and students more time to concentrate on examination preparation. The academy's current predictions indicate that results in the GCSE in 2006 will show some improvement on those of 2005.

In all but one of the lessons seen during the inspection, students made at least satisfactory progress. They made progress which was better than satisfactory when there was effective use of assessment in teachers' planning and in the course of the lessons but there were too few instances of this good practice. The students' attainment in reading on entry to Year 7 is below average overall and standards in literacy are generally low. Those now in Year 8 have had their secondary phase education entirely in the academy. Analysis of their reading test data indicates that most made satisfactory progress in reading between September 2004 and the same month in 2005 but that a significant minority did not. Across the academy, low achievement in literacy and oracy inhibits the progress of many students and it is not yet consistently addressed by teachers, some of whom do not provide good models in their own use of written language.

### **Personal development and well-being**

Overall, the students have positive attitudes to their work. Most settle quickly at the start of lessons and come with the necessary equipment. They listen to the teacher, show interest and are willing to persevere with their tasks. However, too many are allowed to be passive during whole-class discussions and too reliant on the support of adults when working; the students are not used to thinking and reasoning for themselves, and skills of working independently are not firmly established. Some found it hard to be productive when working with a partner.

During this inspection, the students' behaviour was never less than satisfactory and it was often good. Movement around the building was generally orderly, although occasionally boisterous, and the students complied willingly with the teachers' requests. The students were respectful and polite to adults. In lessons, they responded well to the teachers' management of their behaviour. The students reported that they feel safe in the academy and there is little bullying. The rate of exclusions has fallen considerably since last year and is reasonable.

The academy makes good provision for the students' moral and social development. The core values which underpin the academy's work are reinforced in assemblies and in the staff's expectations of how the students will dress, relate to others and behave in lessons. There is a good range of clubs and activities and the students have many chances to take responsibility, for example, by participating in the school council or organising entertainment for local elderly people. The head boy and girl have plans to set up links between older and younger students, and sixth-form students help in lessons. Displays acknowledge the cultural backgrounds of the students and celebrate prominent festivals. The spiritual dimension of the

curriculum is not so firmly established; while the emphasis on values contributes to this, opportunities in the wider curriculum are sometimes missed. The students understand the need for healthy life styles; members of the school council have discussed menus with the canteen manager, for example, and there is a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education, including sex and relationships.

Attendance is improving slowly, but is below the national figure at 90.2% for this term. Those students whose attendance is below 80% are known and steps are taken to work with them and their families. Effective registration systems ensure that there is little internal truancy. The students are not consistently punctual, however, at the start of the day and to lessons. Many lessons are disrupted by the late arrival of two or three students and this is not routinely challenged by all teachers.

The care, guidance and support offered to the students are satisfactory overall. There are particular strengths in the steps the staff take to ensure that the students are safeguarded and are helped to deal with things that worry them. The academy works well in partnership with agencies such as local youth teams and community nurses to help students deal with important issues, and the learning mentors work closely with some students to keep them motivated and focused on learning. Individuals who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported in lessons, but the effectiveness of the support has not yet been evaluated and the academy cannot be sure that the students all make the progress of which they are capable.

The students' generally weak skills in literacy and numeracy need to be improved if they are not to have a negative effect on their future economic well being. The academy is working to improve the students' achievements in these important areas and also provides, in partnership with other organisations, opportunities for teamwork and building co-operative skills.

### **Quality of provision**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Of 18 lessons seen during this inspection, five were good, 12 satisfactory and one inadequate. There is not enough good or better teaching and learning. In the best lessons, there was effective use of the high quality resources, including information and communication technology. The teachers in these cases demonstrated good subject knowledge and enthusiasm which was rapidly caught by the students. They planned for a range of activities to engage interest and to cater for differing learning styles. In all the lessons during the inspection, staff managed behaviour well, usually by well judged use of praise and encouragement but also by responding firmly and promptly when

individuals lost concentration or distracted others. The teaching accommodation is of high quality and the display materials which have been added in many rooms contribute well to the learning resources available.

In the good lessons, there were examples of skilled questioning to develop the students' thinking skills as well as to raise their attainment in oracy. This good practice is not, however, embedded across the academy. While most teachers made frequent use of questioning, answers were too often taken from volunteers, allowing the more diffident to opt out so that it was unclear whether they were following the lesson. Opportunities were missed to add secondary questions to elicit extended responses when students were content with very brief and factual contributions. On occasions, open questions were asked with too little reflection time provided before teachers provided answers themselves or changed the direction of the questioning. Some written models provided on whiteboards contained inaccuracies in the use of spelling or punctuation and marking too often passed over errors in the students' spelling of key subject vocabulary.

There were other weaknesses in lessons which were satisfactory overall. In some lesson plans there was insufficient focus on learning, so that objectives were not sharp enough and more thought was given to what would be done in the lesson than to the knowledge and skills which the students were expected to acquire. Some plenary sessions were weak because they were too brief and because opportunities were missed to assess the levels of the students' understanding before the lesson ended. Teachers have a good range of assessment information available but there is inconsistency in the use which is made of it, and materials were not always well matched to the students' needs nor matched to the learning objectives identified. In one lesson, a student had downloaded a text from the Internet, the language of which was well beyond her reading competence; neither of the adults in the room appeared to have noticed that she was gazing for a protracted period at a text, with very little understanding of its meaning.

The curriculum provides an appropriate range of vocational and work-related opportunities for students in Key Stage 4 and is increasingly flexible in the options being made available to students in Key Stage 3. There is a good range of activities beyond the timetabled curriculum. The sixth form is small but there are clear plans for its future development and ethos.

## **Leadership and management**

The principal has established a clear direction for the new academy, underpinned by a coherent statement of vision and values which is reinforced by the visual messages prominently displayed around the site. The academy's

leaders are realistic in their evaluation of the progress made since its inception and they have demonstrated the capacity for further improvement. They have succeeded in establishing a positive climate for learning, evident in the behaviour and attitudes of the students and in the commitment of the staff to the success of the academy. Much has been achieved in implementing policies, establishing expectations and developing a curriculum increasingly well matched to the students' needs. The academy has only one vice principal so that the workload of the two senior leaders is very heavy. The effectiveness of the subject leaders is satisfactory overall but with some variation. The governors are well informed about the work of the academy and are rigorous and proactive in holding the managers to account for its progress. The governing body has within its membership a broad range of relevant skills and expertise but has been unsuccessful to date in recruiting a parent governor.

The draft strategic plan for 2005-6 identifies priorities and actions which have a clear and appropriate focus on raising attainment and the quality of the provision. The academy's intended approach to the Every Child Matters outcomes is implied rather than set out in explicit form within the draft document.

There are systematic arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and for the induction of new staff. The senior leaders evaluate the quality of teaching as satisfactory overall, with good elements and potential for further improvement; the evidence of this inspection supports that assessment. The academy has a high proportion of teachers who are newly qualified or who joined within the Teach First initiative. These members of staff report positively on the induction arrangements within the academy.

### **External support**

The academy works to good effect with a number of external partners, including schools, universities, the London Challenge initiative and Hillingdon local authority. Staff report favourably on the opportunities for professional development arising from these partnerships, particularly as they apply to the relatively high proportion of recent entrants to teaching.

### **Main Judgements**

The academy has made satisfactory progress. This visit has raised some concerns about the standard of education provided and the academy's performance will be monitored.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- continue to implement measures to raise achievement especially at Key Stage 4
- improve teaching and learning so that more of it is good or better
- improve the students' attendance and their punctuality to lessons

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Academies Division at the DfES.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Bolton  
**HM Inspector**