

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566 947
Direct F 01695 729 320
sdaly@cfbt.com



31 January 2008

Ms R McMullen
Principal
David Young Community Academy
Bishops Way
Seacroft
Leeds
LS14 6NU

Dear Ms McMullen

Academies Initiative: Monitoring Visit to David Young Community Academy

Introduction

Following my visit with Christine Graham HMI to your academy on 29 and 30 January 2008, 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.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents, met with the principal, nominated staff, groups of students, the chair of governors and the sponsor. Lessons were observed in all key stages, including a vocational lesson in construction at the adjacent site.

Context

David Young Community Academy opened in September 2006 in new premises providing for 11 to 18 year-old students. It is located in the Seacroft district of east Leeds, an area of substantial social and economic deprivation. The academy operates a 'fair banding' admissions process which ensures there is a comprehensive intake of students across a full range of abilities. It has an ethos based on Christian values: its sponsor is the Church of England. The academy's subject specialism is Design and the Built Environment. The academy is over-subscribed, in 2007 it received 372 applications for 180 places and there are currently 432 applications for places in

2008. The student population is 920 of which approximately one third are girls, although their numbers are increasing. Sixty five students are on the roll of the small, but expanding, sixth form. The large majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students from minority ethnic communities is just below national average and about half of this group speak English as an additional language. A higher than average proportion of students are entitled to free school meals and a similar proportion have learning difficulties and/or disabilities although a broadly average number have a statement of special educational needs.

Approximately one quarter of the current teaching staff and just over one half of the support staff joined the academy from the predecessor schools. The overwhelming majority of students transferred from these schools when the academy opened.

Achievement and standards

Students' attainment on entry to the academy is well below average and particularly so in the core subjects of English and mathematics. There are relatively few students with high levels of prior attainment.

Standards attained in the first national Key Stage 3 tests taken by academy students in 2007 were below average in English, mathematics and science reflecting the legacy of under-achievement evident in the predecessor schools. The majority of students did not achieve in line with their targets.

Key Stage 4 standards in 2007, while below average, were above target with 42% of students attaining five good GCSE passes and 21% reaching this level including English and mathematics. When compared to the results of predecessor schools, these grades demonstrate good improvement. In addition, students made satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points and particularly when compared to their performance at Key Stage 3. Achievement was satisfactory overall although there were wide subject variations. Students, for example, did particularly well in religious studies, drama and geography, but results in English Literature, science and food technology were disappointing. Three quarters of students attained five or more A* to G grades and over nine tenths gained at least one qualification. Both results represent satisfactory progress. Girls performed less well than boys overall. Intensive support provided for targeted groups of girls is now helping them to improve their overall rates of progress.

While the recruitment of students to the sixth form is increasing only nine students sat AS level examinations in 2007 in either business studies or sociology. Results were mainly below average. Nonetheless, current Year 12 students have been well supported to make appropriate course choices with few changes being required. The academy's own assessment evidence suggests the majority are making satisfactory progress in line with their targets.

Academy staff track students' performance in exacting detail through regular assessments and these are continually monitored against individual targets. Under-achievement is identified quickly and interventions are swift and effective. Procedures are most effective at Key Stage 4 where teachers use information well to

inform lesson preparation to personalise learning for students. This makes a substantial contribution to the improved rates of progress evident in most lessons and has heightened staff expectations of students' capabilities. This is now reflected in much higher Key Stage 4 targets and greater confidence by students in what they can achieve. Fewer teachers use assessment information well to plan lesson activities at Key Stage 3 and this is a limiting factor in the progress made by too many students, and targets here remain too low.

Personal development and well-being

The academy has made good progress in bringing together students from different schools and backgrounds into one cohesive student body. Students speak very positively about the academy and wear their uniforms with pride. Systems to manage and monitor behaviour are effective. Students understand rules and the large majority conform to expectations. Robust procedures and a substantial staff presence help maintain good behaviour in lessons and around the academy. An increasing proportion of students are well motivated and behave well even when not closely observed. Relationships within the academy are very positive. Lunch-times are pleasant, social and well managed affairs providing opportunities for students to socialise and make new friends. Staff choose to eat their meals in the restaurant: they monitor behaviour and intervene if necessary.

The very good system of pastoral care does a great deal to help students feel safe, valued and well cared for. This includes the effective form system which provides students with high quality care and support. Team leaders attached to each form provide a successful link between home and academy through productive relationships with parents and carers. Team leaders attend all pastoral and academic meetings and this has successfully increased the number of parents who attend. Students are also appreciative of the pastoral support provided by the academy chaplain, expressing appreciation for his contribution and the help he affords.

All procedures to ensure students are safe are implemented rigorously. Students express confidence in staff and willingly confide in team leaders and others if they have concerns. The support given to vulnerable students, including those with poor attendance or at risk of exclusion, is very effective. Much good work is undertaken to raise students' self-esteem with staff targeting individual students for attention and inclusion in specific courses and events. The range of opportunities is significant and includes, for example, the academy musical production and courses to support students' academic progress, raise their self-esteem and prepare them for life after school. Additional provision for underachieving and vulnerable girls is particularly effective.

Effective work has resulted in a steady improvement in attendance levels with academy records indicating a 4% improvement to 87% in overall rates in 2007 compared to previously. Fixed term exclusions are still high but have declined, while permanent exclusions have reduced significantly. Robust procedures are in place to promote punctuality: most students arrive on time although a minority still arrive late on a regular basis.

Quality of provision

Good progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching. In most lessons seen, teaching was good. This was particularly evident at Key Stage 4. In the remaining lessons teaching was mainly satisfactory, predominantly at Key Stage 3.

Most teachers have very effective strategies to deal with difficult or challenging behaviour and ensure that the pace and focus of the lesson is maintained. Lessons are planned carefully, although there are inconsistencies in planning formats and the manner in which teachers use assessment information when planning lesson activities. Where this information is used well, tasks match students' learning needs and they make good progress. In too many lessons at Key Stage 3 however insufficient account is taken of students' prior learning, resulting in tasks which do not meet the needs of all. Where this occurs students do not make enough progress. Teachers' marking of students' work is inconsistent. While some is good, too much does not comply with the academy's guidelines and this leaves students unclear about the quality of their work and how to improve further.

Improvement in the quality of learning is satisfactory although this varies significantly between departments and across year groups. The legacy of under-achievement and poor attendance has left many students with substantial gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Many lack independent learning skills and are heavily reliant on the support of their teachers. Some students have previously experienced failure and have only recently realised the potential they have. Others have missed a great deal of work through poor attendance and need additional support to catch up. Nonetheless, the majority of students display positive attitudes towards their work, listen attentively and try hard.

Many of the least able students and those returning to the academy following extended periods of absence find some lessons overly long. Their concentration declines towards the end of sessions and teachers struggle to retain their attention. These students in particular still require adult support because their independent learning skills and confidence are not well established. In contrast, the more able students enjoy the longer lessons and consider that learning is more thorough, particularly when teaching is innovative and sessions present a variety of activities. Increasing numbers of students are beginning to assess their progress, evaluate their work and comment on how well the objectives of the lesson have been reached.

The academy offers students a good curriculum which is carefully planned to ensure they receive their full entitlement to all subjects. It is increasingly innovative, offering a range of options which meets students' needs and interests. Significant care is given to customising course options for students.

The academy offers a two year Key Stage 3 curriculum. All students completing Years 7 and 8 in 2007 were assessed, with the larger proportion moving to the final year of Key Stage 3, regardless of age. A small proportion of students however have remained in Year 8. While this has proved positive for those students moving to the end of Key Stage 3 it has not been the case for some of the other students. The

attendance of this group has declined and the attitudes and behaviour of some students has worsened. The academy is taking steps to improve matters.

The national strategy provides the basis for planning core subjects, although senior staff recognise that insufficient time is given to improving students' basic literacy skills and measures are planned to remedy this. The academy's specialism is beginning to make an impact, especially in terms of art and design. This has been somewhat delayed through difficulties in appointing a lead member of staff although this has now been successfully concluded. The academy enjoys good and productive partnership links with colleges and universities and offers a very effective alternative curriculum for the most disaffected students at Key Stages 3 and 4.

Leadership and management

The governors, principal and senior leadership provide clear strategic direction and high ambition for the academy. The highly effective leadership of the principal and the efficient and committed support she receives from the senior leadership team results in a collective determination to tackle the substantial legacy of under-achievement and low expectations.

Insightful and comprehensive monitoring has provided the academy's leadership with an accurate understanding of its strengths and where further progress is required. Consequently, improvement activities are securely aligned to where improvement is required the most.

The academy's capacity for further sustained improvement is strong and is being further strengthened by a substantial commitment to leadership and pedagogical development through well planned training programmes.

Management systems are clearly defined and rigorously implemented. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities both academically and pastorally. Senior and middle leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to maintaining a calm and orderly environment and they are successful. A high level of care for students' welfare is apparent. Staff are unified in their desire for the academy to improve and morale is good. Staff know they are well supported and recognise the senior leadership's expectations of them to continually improve. They also recognise that under-performance will be robustly tackled.

Middle leadership roles are, however, still evolving and while there is variability in performance there are notable strengths. At its most effective, departmental leaders have a secure focus on learning and a detailed understanding of student performance, but this is not consistent everywhere. Nonetheless, changes are being made to build capacity and improve consistency to achieve a higher level of effectiveness through a substantial investment in developing the capacity of middle and senior leaders.

The governing body, represented by the chair and sponsor, demonstrate a sharp and detailed understanding of the academy's performance. There is a clear emphasis on

holding senior staff to account for their work. Governors' strategic aspirations are securely aligned to those espoused by the academy's senior leaders. Consequently, there is a shared commitment to rigorously tackle under-achievement and to drive improvements. In addition, many governors take part directly in 'Academic Board' meetings with parents which provide a forum for evaluating students' progress.

The academy is an orderly community. The environment is a welcoming place within which students are able to learn and develop. A high level of care and maintenance is evident in all parts of the building and grounds.

External support

The academy has developed a number of useful links with a range of organisations within the local community and the city of Leeds and with the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. Productive work with local partners such as Leeds College of Building is enabling the academy, for example, to offer a wider range of courses to accommodate the needs and aspirations of all students.

Main Judgements

The academy has made good progress towards raising standards.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to raise standards, paying particular attention to students' progress and attainment at Key Stage 3.
- Improve consistency in the use of assessment information at Key Stage 3 to ensure that all staff use this information to better support their lesson preparation to meet the needs of all students.
- Improve the quality and consistency of marking to ensure that all students receive feedback about how well they have done and about how to improve further.
- Continue to raise levels of attendance and further reduce exclusions.
- Continue to develop and bring greater consistency to the quality and effectiveness of all in middle leadership positions.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the diocese and the Academies Group at the DCSF.

Yours sincerely

Tom Grieveson
HM Inspector of Schools