

Haberdashers' Aske's Knights Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135070
Inspection number	322337
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Robert Ellis HMI

This inspection of the academy was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
Academy	850
6th form	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Glover
Principal	Dr E Sidwell (Executive) Mrs Y MacCallum (Principal)
Date of previous academy inspection	Not previously inspected
Academy address	Launcelot Road Bromley BR1 5EB
Telephone number	020 8698 1025
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the academy

The academy opened in September 2005 in temporary accommodation on the site of the former Mallory School. The academy's new building opened in April 2007 but parts of the academy site were not fully available until January 2008. The academy is part of a federation with Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham College, with which it shares a chief executive, board of governors, and sixth form provision. There are significantly more boys than girls, particularly in the upper school. The academy serves a diverse community and around two thirds of the students come from different minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students who have additional educational needs and/or do not have English as their first language is well above average, as is the proportion of students who are entitled to free school meals. The academy has specialisms of sport and information and communication technology and achieved the Investors in People award in February 2007.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the academy

Grade: 2

Knights academy is a rapidly improving school that provides a good education for its students. As one parent wrote: 'there has been enormous effort put in to help my child achieve'. Staff are committed to making sure that students feel safe and enjoy learning, and it is evident that students are valued and cared for. Good teaching enables students to achieve well and standards, although generally below average, are rising because student progress is tracked rigorously and intervention programmes for most students who are identified as falling behind are effective.

Students are enthusiastic about their learning, and behave well both in lessons and around the academy. Good relationships are evident at all levels and students work well in teams. A good range of extension activities, including enrichment activity days where students have the opportunity to work with different age groups, enriches a well-planned, motivating curriculum. The academy's specialisms of information and communication technology and sport make a positive contribution to raising attainment. All students experience at least two hours of good quality physical education each week and the majority participate in one or more additional sports activities. The academy has very strong links with a broad range of sports clubs and organisations at local, national and international level. Students say that they value and enjoy the extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities, for example music, drama, sports, and expeditions to countries such as Sweden and China.

There are good partnerships with parents and outside agencies to support learning. Consequently, most students in the school achieve well in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Most students who have learning difficulties are supported very effectively but some do not receive as much support as they need and do not always make as much progress as they could.

Students' personal skills are good and pupils are polite and considerate. Older students are good role models and help care for the younger ones, and student leaders ensure that the academy day runs smoothly. Attendance figures are above average and improving because of the robust systems for monitoring attendance and challenging and supporting those who do not attend well. Students are able to make a positive contribution to the community and they are engaged in a variety of charitable and other ventures. A good example is students from the academy working with pupils from a local special school. There are many opportunities for students to have a say in helping to develop the academy community and their views and opinions are respected and taken account of, for example, students played a leading role in the continuing development of the academy uniform.

The academy building and recently developed outside areas provide good accommodation that students appreciate and care for. The senior leadership team focus on developing high standards in both work and personal development. They work effectively together and monitoring of the academy's work is good. Although senior leaders use evaluation well, middle leaders do not do this so consistently well. The governing body is well informed and holds the academy to account for the standards it achieves, and the federation provides further good quality support. As a result, the academy has made rapid progress in improving student aspiration and the quality of education it provides. Good capacity for further improvement is demonstrated by success in raising standards, establishing a strong positive ethos and improving attendance.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

This small and relatively new sixth form is rapidly developing well under good leadership. It enables its students to access a good range of courses through the federation with Hatcham College. Most students take a mix of vocational and A-level courses and these are appropriate to their needs and interests. Most students can choose from a good range of courses. However, the range of choices for students who did not achieve good GCSE results is more limited. Students are making expected progress in their courses of study and reaching standards that are broadly average overall, with emerging strengths in ICT and sport where take up is high. Students benefit from very rigorous academic guidance. They say regular scrutiny of progress and their teachers' high demands in relation to work are instrumental in keeping them focused on their studies. Students are diligent in their work but admit that their skills as independent learners have yet to be fully developed. Sixth-form students are growing in the impact they make on younger students, not just through the leading parts some play in the life of the school and community but for the positive attitudes to life and learning they convey. It was only possible for inspectors to observe a small sample of sixth form lessons and the inspection team did not have sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement on the quality of teaching in the sixth form.

What the academy should do to improve further

- Extend support to improve literacy and numeracy skills for all students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Build on the current good development of middle managers to ensure that evaluation focuses consistently on outcomes for students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Older students joined the academy with well below average attainment but as the academy has become established the profile of attainment has improved. In the current Year 7, there is the full range of attainment in English, mathematics and science. In the 2007 national tests at the end of Year 9, standards were below the national average. However, this represents good progress in relation to the students' starting points. At the end of Key Stage 4 good improvement, compared to the previous year, was achieved in GCSE examination results. The proportion of students achieving five or more subjects at grade A*-C rose from 29% to 42%. However, standards in most subjects remained below average and there was some unevenness in students' performance across different subjects. Improvement was particularly noticeable in physical education.

Most students make at least good progress from Year 7 to Year 11 with no groups underachieving significantly. The academy's current assessment information shows that most students are on track to achieve challenging targets in 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The academy successfully enables students to develop as well-rounded, friendly and confident young people. Courteous behaviour and consideration for others, evident in most lessons and around the academy, attest to the students' good moral and social development. Students show an exceptional awareness of healthy lifestyles and recognise the importance of regular exercise. They participate well in the many sporting activities on offer and value the opportunity to represent their academy. They also take full advantage of the selection of healthy meals on offer at lunchtime.

Students say that they feel safe in school and work together well creating an harmonious community which demonstrates a respect for cultural diversity. Assemblies provide students with opportunities to reflect on significant and emotive issues, and this contributes significantly to their spiritual development. In lessons such as history, religious education and geography students report that they have opportunities to develop an independent attitude by exploring sensitive issues such as personal belief versus citizenship responsibilities.

The academy sets high expectations of conduct, and students report that there are very few incidents of bullying or racism and they are certain that any problems 'would be fixed by staff'. The number of permanent exclusions is decreasing. Students on temporary exclusions report that they are well supported on their return. Very positive attitudes to learning and the students' huge enjoyment of school are reflected in the above-average attendance figures. The improvement in attendance over recent years has resulted from robust monitoring procedures and the good support of pastoral staff. The academy acknowledges that a small number of students do not always comply with the academy code of conduct and staff work diligently to minimise the impact that their attitudes have on the learning of others. Students have good opportunities to develop skills necessary for further study or employment. However, the relatively low levels of literacy and numeracy skills of some students could limit future prospects.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: Insufficient Evidence

The quality of teaching is good because the academy has been successful in creating an environment for learning where students feel they are known as individuals and where relationships at all levels are good.

In most lessons, staff and students have high expectations. Well-structured tasks, matched closely to students' needs and interests, enable students to succeed. A good range of activities that require both independent and collaborative working and a brisk pace and good use of time help students to concentrate. Students demonstrate a positive attitude to learning and the teachers actively engage them in assessing their own and others' learning. In many lessons, skilled adults support the teacher well to help accelerate students' learning.

A small proportion of teaching is less successful and students do not make the progress that they should because the lessons are not sufficiently focussed on how well students are learning,

and because expectations of what students can achieve are too low. In some lessons students who have learning difficulties and disabilities do not get the additional help that they need to enable good progress.

The quality of marking is variable, some gives students a clear idea of precisely what they need to do to improve their subject skills but sometimes feedback does not make sufficient reference to the learning objective and does not identify the next learning steps for students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The many exemplary features in the curriculum, both in the timetabled courses and in the extensive enrichment programme, constitute key elements in the academy's successful work on raising standards. Students speak extremely appreciatively of all that is on offer. They cite the vast range of sporting activities, trips, visits, themed enrichment days, and opportunities to develop leadership skills and contribute to the school and wider community as adding great enjoyment to learning. The academy's specialisms and a great many links with external partners have been extremely instrumental in enhancing education provision. Some very innovative approaches are taken to boost students' literacy and numeracy skills, linked to sport, for example. The academy has already designed and implemented some courses that enable students to learn according to their 'stage not age'. Further developments are planned to extend already good provision for gifted and talented students who can move speedily through course materials and gain early accreditation in some subjects. Whilst good overall, provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is inconsistent and the academy recognises that there is scope for improvement in this area. Students in Years 7 to 11 value the single sex lessons in many subjects. They also value staff readiness to offer additional help out of lesson time. The federation with Hatcham College allows sixth form students to access a good curriculum and students follow a mixture of academic and vocational courses that suit their needs and interests well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

'Everyone feels cared for here'. This is how one student described the effect of the very good support provided for all students by both teaching and non-teaching staff. Students are confident that the rare cases of bullying will be dealt with promptly and successfully. The school cares very well for vulnerable students, making sure that they have staff to talk to and safe places to go to at difficult times. Focused and effective support is provided for those who are at the early stages of learning English. Students in Year 7 arriving at the academy with low literacy skills are identified quickly and make exceptional progress as a result of intensive and skilled intervention. Teachers provide appropriate work and guidance for students who have learning difficulties and disabilities in lessons and some are well supported by well trained and enthusiastic teaching assistants. However, some students' progress is limited by low literacy and numeracy skills. They do not all receive the help they need because there are too few teaching assistants and the accommodation is too small for the number of students who need support.

A comprehensive system for monitoring academic achievement, target setting for students and reporting to parents has been introduced in the last year. These new arrangements and expectations for providing effective feedback to students through marking, are well understood by staff, but are not yet embedded consistently into day-to-day practice in all lessons. Guidance for course choices at the end of Year 9 and for further education or employment after GCSE is both personal and thorough. Staff are vetted thoroughly for suitability, and robust and effective child protection procedures are in place. Risk assessments and other checks are carried out appropriately for the school premises and for off-site activities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

In the short time that the academy has been in existence the leadership of the academy has successfully focused on raising standards and promoting the personal development and well-being of learners. Senior managers use monitoring and evaluation well to identify strengths and areas for development. Middle leaders, many of whom are relatively new to their responsibilities, are developing rapidly because of the good continuing professional development they receive. However, some are not yet fully effective in their roles and evaluation does not focus sharply enough on outcomes for students. The rapid improvement in standards and the development of distinctive ethos are clear evidence of good capacity for further improvement. Good links have been formed with parents and outside agencies to support learning. Parents are supportive and particularly value the opportunities that academy life offers their children. Procedures for safeguarding students are robust and effective. Governors provide a good balance of support and challenge and are well informed about the progress that the academy has made. The federation partnership has made a positive contribution, particularly in providing support to the academy when it first opened and increasingly through the good partnership arrangements that are developing between the two schools.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	Academy Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA
How well does the academy work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	IE ²
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the academy's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this academy require special measures?	No	
Does this academy require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Haberdashers' Aske's Knights Academy, Bromley, BR1 5EB

Thank you for contributing to the inspection and a particular thank you to all of you who took time to speak to us so openly and honestly about your academy. This letter provides a brief summary of our findings but I hope you will take time to read the full report.

The academy provides a good standard of education and it is improving rapidly. Examination results are improving because of the positive attitudes you have developed to learning and the good quality of teaching you receive. You have good opportunities to develop as responsible and considerate young people and we saw this in the polite and thoughtful way that you greeted us and in the way that you offered help to visitors. You told us that you feel safe and get on well with the other students and with the adults who work with you. You have an exceptional range of subjects to study and this has enabled most of you to choose subjects that match your capabilities and interests. The numerous clubs and activities that are available also impressed us and we were pleased to see that a very high proportion of you participate enthusiastically in sport, some of you at a very high level.

Most of you are supported well and make good progress but a few of you who need extra help do not always get as much help as you need, so we have asked the academy to improve this aspect of its work.

The academy is led well and those responsible for leading and managing the academy are always looking for ways to make it better. Although leaders know what the academy is good at and where it needs to improve we have asked them to focus more sharply on evaluating how the actions they take improve your education.

You have good opportunities to prepare for work or further study but you need to make sure that you do as well as you can in all your subjects, particularly mathematics and English. I am sure that you will want to continue to work hard and play your part in making the academy an even more successful school.

My best wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis
Her Majesty's Inspector