

Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135073
Inspection number	322338
Inspection dates	20–21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Carmen Rodney 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	1410
6th form	376
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Glover
Principal	Dr E Sidwell (Executive) Mrs M Adamson (Principal)
Date of previous academy inspection	Not previously inspected
Academy address	Pepys Road New Cross London SE14 5SF
Telephone number	020 7652 9500
Fax number	020 7732 1934

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

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

Description of the academy

Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham College is much larger than most secondary schools and serves a socially and economically deprived multi-racial area. Its intake on entry is fully comprehensive. Hatcham, formerly a city technology college, became part of the Haberdashers' Aske's Academies Federation in September 2005 after joining with Knights Academy. The academy plays a leading role in the federation, which shares a chief executive, a single governing body and sixth form provision.

Applications to Year 7 far exceed places available and the sixth form is very large and popular. Half of the students are of White British heritage and half are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students who do not speak English as their first language is well above average, as is the proportion of students entitled to free school meals. An above average proportion of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college provides specialist support in Aspergers and Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

In 2006, the federation gained Investors in People status and Hatcham, the Arts Mark Gold, Investors in Careers, Cisco Systems and Oracle Internet Academy. The academy has specialisms in music and information and communication technology (ICT). The college intends to expand its provision to offer education to students from aged 3 to 18 years from September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the academy

Grade: 1

Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham College provides its students with an outstanding education. Students achieve highly because the academy sets ambitious targets and challenges each student to recognise what they can achieve. By the end of Year 9, and 11, students reach high standards and achieve exceptionally well in the GCSE examinations. Within this picture of outstanding achievement, students exceed the national averages in the core subjects: English, mathematics and science. Sixth-form students make similarly outstandingly good progress. Hatcham, formerly a high performing city technology college, has sustained the high level of performance with an improving trend since becoming an academy in 2005. This is outstanding achievement and is an excellent foundation for future learning. In particular, students' performance shows that Black and minority ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities buck the national trend for their groups and achieve results that are consistently well above average.

The academy promotes the anti-discriminatory legislation well, so that all groups have equal opportunities to achieve very well. High achievement is combined with the analytical use of assessment data, which is used robustly to track each student's progress, identify potential under-performance and make changes to provision. However, although data is very well managed, and students understand their targets and take part in self-assessment, there are inconsistencies in the quality of marking.

Students' high achievement is part of a bigger picture of the excellent provision. The exceptionally good curriculum is enhanced by the academy's specialisms in music and ICT. These subjects symbolise the academy's ethos; they are used to nurture students' talents and provide opportunities for them to pursue and excel in a specialist area of interest. For example, Year 8 students have the opportunity to take an advanced ICT course early and students are encouraged to initiate musical ensembles. A comment from one parent sums up the view of most parents on the sterling work of the music department: 'the musical opportunities has provided my child to learn about classical music, jazz, gospel...I now know about musicians...'

The academy does not stand still and constantly reviews and develops its curriculum ensuring that it meets the needs of students. The quality of teaching is given a high priority and is outstandingly good particularly in the upper school. However, occasionally there is insufficient challenge in the lower school, which affects the pace of teaching and learning.

The provision for students' care, personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students' enjoyment of learning, their behaviour and attitudes and sense of responsibility towards others is particularly strong in the upper school. However, in Years 7 to 9, too many students who lack maturity do not display a similar sense of regard for the long established Askean ethos and traditions. Consequently, their behaviour and attitudes are good rather than outstanding. A significant minority of parents feel that behaviour in these year groups needs further improvement. The Inspection confirms this concern.

The college has been instrumental in making a significant contribution to shaping students' character: they grow in confidence and maturity through the carefully planned opportunities provided for them to become independent young people, able to make decisions and articulate their ideas clearly and convincingly. Experiences such as being ambassadors for the academy, holding elected positions or making choices about their future will remain with them for life. Students are proud of their school, and the vast majority recognise the benefits of being a part

of the Askean brand. They like the wide range of opportunities available to participate in activities, locally, nationally and internationally. A few students would like to see more diversity in the academy's provision but discussions with parents revealed that they see the very diverse nature of the intake and the provision as key strengths of the academy. The inspection accords with this view. Although Hatcham is an exceptional place of learning, a significant minority of parents feel that there are some flaws. The academy sends parents a great deal of information throughout the academic year, nevertheless, some parents identified communication as an area of concern and the need for the academy to listen to their views and that of their children. Inspectors agree with this view.

At the heart of the success of the academy are the outstanding leadership and management at all levels. The long-standing traditions and high academic standards, the bedrock of Hatcham, have been sustained under the successful leadership of the executive principal who is very well supported by the principal and other senior staff. She has ensured that this large and expanding academy maintains the momentum for improvement. The executive principal has gained the respect of stakeholders and the wider community, including academics and politicians. The senior team has many distinctive features. For example, they articulate the priorities very well, they have been highly effective in spreading the benefits of their expertise by helping failing schools to achieve well; initiatives are welcomed; talents are nurtured and academic research is used very well to develop new ideas and ensure that legislative changes in relation to curriculum planning are tailored to needs. Governance of the school is excellent. Governors are well informed, they have developed specific procedures to challenge the school and hold it to account and carry out their statutory duties very well.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is outstanding. Students begin with standards that are just above those typically found nationally, but leave with examination results that are well above average. This represents outstanding achievement. In 2007, students achieved outstanding results in business studies, economics, English literature, French, geography, history, ICT, media studies, physical education and sociology. This is as a result of an extensive, innovative curriculum and high quality teaching. Students speak enthusiastically and warmly about the highly supportive atmosphere in the sixth form. They report that any potential barriers to their achievement are dealt with by staff in a highly effective and discrete manner.

During the inspection, all teaching observed in the sixth form was either good or outstanding. In a good chemistry lesson, the students were very purposefully engaged in a close analysis of an examiner's report. This lesson was extraordinary because of the opportunity for students to lead the class and become teachers themselves. They rose to the challenge with great skill and confidence. The teacher's probing questioning style was typical of the teaching seen in other lessons.

Students are very appreciative of the range of courses on offer, the extra-curricular opportunities and work-related options available. They feel very well informed about both these opportunities and their routes into higher education. Almost all students go on to higher education to study a wide range of courses. However, there is no requirement for students to engage in physical activities; the academy is aware of this.

What the academy should do to improve further

- Improve the attitudes and behaviour of Year 7–9 students to match those of older students.

- Improve communication with parents, take more account of students' views and ensure that work is consistently well marked.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Older students joined the academy with generally above average attainment but the overall attainment on entry of Years 7 and 8 is lower than Year 9 and demonstrates a changing academy population.

In the 2007 national tests at the end of Year 9, standards were well above the national average and this represents outstanding progress in relation to the students' starting points. At the end of Key Stage 4 over 90% of students achieved five or more good GCSE results at grades A* -C and results were particularly high in English and mathematics. Students make at least good progress from Year 7 to Year 11 with no groups underachieving significantly. The academy's current assessment information and evidence from lessons seen shows that most students are on track to achieve or exceed challenging targets in 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. During their time at the academy, students mature into thoughtful, confident and articulate young people who are very well prepared for life beyond school.

Students' excellent understanding of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle is apparent in their choice of food in the canteen and the very high participation rates in a very wide range of sporting activities. They feel very safe in school and are confident that any instances of bullying will be effectively dealt with. Their movement around the academy generally shows consideration for others and they are polite and courteous. These characteristics are more evident in Years 10 to 13; behaviour in these years is outstanding and makes a key contribution to ensuring successful achievement. However, in Years 7 to 9, lessons are sometimes disrupted by off-task chatter and poor concentration by some students.

Students have a real sense of pride in the academy and enjoy all that it has to offer. Attendance across all year groups is consistently well above the national average; the academy attributes this to very high levels of parental support. There are many opportunities for students to make positive contributions to the community and links with outside organisations are strong. Involvement in charities, trips and visits, particularly by those in the sixth form help to give a wide perspective that adds significantly to students' personal development and enjoyment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. The most successful lessons include teachers using expert subject knowledge, excellent planning and well targeted questioning, which develop students' understanding and higher order thinking skills. Teachers use a range of teaching styles to engage and challenge students. The academy successfully nurtures a culture where students learn how to learn. In turn, students apply a range of basic and high ordered skills very well across subjects. This, when combined with excellent student/teacher relationships and high expectations enables students to make good and often outstanding progress.

Teachers frequently check learning and understanding, particularly in Years 10 to 13, and students receive regular feedback on how well they are doing. In many lessons, students are guided and encouraged to develop their ability to assess their own work. However, the quality of marking is variable. In some subjects, comments are not given to help students improve their work. Teachers use ICT effectively and students are encouraged to use it to research and present their work.

Professional development is highly valued. The school offers an excellent professional development programme to improve teaching and learning and teachers spread the benefits of good practice widely.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students are very well served by a rich and flexible curriculum that meets their needs and aspirations. There is outstanding provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT. The curriculum is further enriched by an outstanding range of well-attended enrichment and extension activities. A large number of students have outstanding opportunities to participate in the performing arts, particularly music. Their enthusiastic participation in an impressive range of good quality public performances builds confidence and raises self-esteem. There are good opportunities for older students to develop independence and to take responsibility through participation in activities like the school council, Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and the federations' combined cadet force. Progression routes are clear and students say that they like the good range of options that are available to them. Students are well prepared for future employment by the strong work related element to the curriculum that offers team building, enterprise skills and work experience.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The care, guidance and support of students are outstanding. The academy takes its responsibilities for the safety and well-being of students seriously and there are careful procedures in place to ensure students are free to learn within safe and secure environments. On this strong foundation, the personal development and care of individual students is ensured

and carefully monitored. This ensures that students, and particularly those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make outstanding progress through the academy.

In the upper school exemplary academic guidance, for example in English and geography, provides students with regularly marked work that supports their learning and helps them to understand what they need to do next to improve. In the lower school, academic guidance is not as consistent. In the sixth form, excellent careers guidance, including that from successful past students, helps to guide career choices and prepare students well for their further education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The senior leaders are a cohesive team; they know the priorities for the future, and what needs to be done to transform their vision for sustaining high achievement into action. A well-structured leadership team has developed under the leadership of the executive principal. The management systems enable them to have open discussions about professional development and the academy's progress. This has been highly effective in contributing to the federation arrangements and in the way that the academy is making a significant contribution to other institutions. Consequently, the ethos, which embraces a number of beliefs and values, is evident in the day-to-day running of the academy and in the opportunities available to students. Monitoring is generally accurate although there is a tendency to be slightly generous when grading the quality of teaching.

A committed and loyal team of middle managers supports the academy's vision very well. Their reviews, detailed self-evaluation and development plans have been key factors in developing their capacity for further improvement. Although examination results are analysed, sufficient attention is not always given to analysing how well all groups achieve.

Financial management and planning are secure. The academy is not daunted by the future; there is increasing reflection about the needs of students and the actions needed to retain the Askean traditions. As such, the academy is very well placed to make further improvements.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	1	1
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	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the academy's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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

06 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham College, London, SE14 5SF

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly to your academy. We thoroughly enjoyed visiting your lessons and listening to your views, particularly of those who approached us, members of the school council and the sixth form.

The academy provides you with a first class education that is helping all of you to make outstanding progress. This is a remarkable achievement because nationally, your school is consistently bucking the trend in helping all groups to achieve above the expectations set for their respective group. Although the academy is quite new, it has held on to and used the tradition of high expectations and outcomes for all students. Discussions with you and your parents clearly confirmed that the good old-fashioned values of 'discipline', 'hard work' and 'high expectations and challenge' have provided you with excellent opportunities to develop your skills and place you in good stead.

The academy is determined to give you a high quality education that is on par with the best nationally. Academic achievement is consistently higher than might be expected the quality of teaching is outstandingly good as is the curriculum, and quality of care provided. In particular, the specialisms in ICT and music are providing you with some wonderful opportunities. All that the academy offers has had a lasting impact on your personal development and well-being, which is also outstanding because of the excellent opportunities provided for you to pursue interests and participate in a very wide range of activities. This achievement has to be linked to the exemplary leadership of Dr Sidwell who has steered the academy with the very good support of Mrs Adamson and a committed and loyal staff.

Outstanding schools are not necessarily perfect. The senior leaders and all staff will be working with some students in Year 7 to 9 to improve their attitudes and behaviour to the level of the older students. The senior leaders will also be looking at how they can best improve communication with you and your parents. Additionally, senior leaders also recognise that some of your work needs to be better marked.

All the very best for the future.

Carmen Rodney (on behalf of the inspection team) Her Majesty's Inspector