



25 April 2005

Mr P Crook  
Principal  
The Academy at Peckham  
112 Peckham Road  
London  
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Dear Mr Crook

### **Academies Initiative: Inspection Visit to The Academy at Peckham**

Thank you for your hospitality during my visit to your academy with Chris Redman HMI on 20 and 21 April 2005. This letter is to confirm the findings, which are recorded below.

This inspection visit was arranged in connection with the academies initiative. The focus was the pupils' attainment and the factors affecting it; the effectiveness and impact of the actions which you are already taking to raise the pupils' attainment; and the implementation of plans for the development of the academy.

During the visit 20 lessons or parts of lessons and one registration session were inspected. The pupils in Year 11 were taking examinations during the two days of the inspection, consequently no lessons were observed for this year group. Meetings were held with the principal, members of the senior and middle management teams and three groups of pupils. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils, and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the principal, the chair of governors and a representative from the DfES.

The Academy at Peckham opened in September 2003, following the closure of the predecessor school, Warwick Park, in August 2003; it has a dual specialism in business and enterprise and in the performing arts. The academy serves an area of particular social disadvantage within a borough which has significant social and economic deprivation. There are 1078 pupils on roll. A sixth form opened in September 2004 with 107 students on roll. The academy is planned to grow to around 1450 pupils. The academy is significantly oversubscribed for September 2005.

The profile of the pupils reflects the academy's inner city, multi-cultural catchment area. There are more than twice as many boys as girls on the roll. Fifty five per

cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals; well above the national average. About 40 per cent of the pupils have special educational needs, including 39 with a Statement of Special Educational Need; both these figures are well above the national average. Almost half of the pupils at the academy have English as an additional language. There are currently 14 Looked After Children on roll. Following the transfer of staff from the predecessor school and a range of new appointments, the academy is fully staffed with specialist teachers.

The 2004 GCSE results were poor, with only 12 per cent of the Year 11 pupils achieving five or more grades A\* to C; however, only 4 per cent left Key Stage 4 without at least one subject pass and the proportion gaining two, three or four higher grades rose when compared with the previous year in the predecessor school. In most subjects the pupils' progress was unsatisfactory, but in mathematics, drama and Spanish their progress was at least sound.

The 2004 Key Stage 3 results were well below the national average. About a third of the Year 9 pupils achieved the nationally expected level, or higher, in English and science and almost half achieved that level in mathematics. The academy's targets were exceeded in mathematics, but the results fell short of the targets in English and science. However, these results were the highest achieved by the academy or the predecessor school.

The quality of teaching varied widely from outstanding to unsatisfactory; it was satisfactory or better in 17 lessons, including six where it was good or better. The teaching was outstanding in a Year 10 English lesson and very good in a Year 9 dance lesson. Good teaching occurred in two lessons in design and technology and one in science. The teaching was unsatisfactory in three mathematics lessons.

Where the teaching was at least good, it was characterised by careful planning, exposition that captured the interest of the pupils and motivated them effectively, challenging work that was well structured to help the pupils achieve success and very good behaviour management, including the use of praise to reinforce positive achievements. The very best teaching enthralled the pupils, enabling them to engage with difficult concepts with considerable maturity and sensitivity.

In less successful lessons, particularly where the teaching was unsatisfactory, insufficient account had been taken of how the pupils learn effectively; the teaching predominantly required the pupils to be involved in passive learning styles, such as listening and copying the teacher's work. The challenge of the work was too often poorly matched to the pupils' previous attainment and did not pay sufficient attention to developing literacy skills such as speaking and writing.

The quality of learning, including the progress made by the pupils, was satisfactory or better in 16 lessons; it was good or better in six. The learning was closely linked to the effectiveness of the teaching. In many lessons the pupils tackled the work readily and understood the goals they were working towards. In the most successful lessons, the pupils were enthusiastic and worked eagerly. However,

weak literacy skills restricted their progress at times; for example, too many pupils did not have the oral skills to benefit from opportunities to discuss their ideas with others and found difficulty in expressing their ideas clearly in writing. The pupils' presentation of written work was generally below the standards typical of their age. Problem-solving skills were often weak and too many pupils were reliant on adult help to make adequate progress.

The decision to move to four 80 minute periods during the day has bought many advantages, including the opportunity for the pupils to explore and consolidate new areas of learning in one session. The most effective lessons provided a good variety of activities and exploited the additional time successfully. However, some teachers' planning was inadequate and their expectations of what the pupils could achieve were too low.

The academy's comprehensive programme to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, including a notably robust and honest approach to departmental reviews, has enabled the managers to have an accurate knowledge of the strengths and areas for development in the current provision. Training and development has been very well designed to tackle identified weaknesses and there is a tangible sense of excitement among the managers about how to promote the pupils' learning. The planning for a weekend course for senior and middle managers rightly emphasises the need to develop and integrate planning at all levels.

The academy's dual specialism is a strength of the provision and is well conceived to meet the needs of this cohort of pupils. The business opportunities have provided an appropriate and motivating curriculum; particularly for those pupils who were vulnerable to leaving education. All pupils take a unit in entrepreneurial skills as part of their personal, social and health education programme in Year 9. The performing arts' dimension is continuing to grow as the academy's facilities are developed and is offering many pupils the chance to develop their confidence and self esteem in a variety of settings. The professionalism, which is a feature of both the specialist areas, is helping to create a climate of high expectation throughout the academy.

The quality of display in public areas is of a high standard. Many classrooms have been disrupted by the building programme and their environment has understandably been affected; however, in some areas there was very limited display with little to stimulate or support the pupils' learning.

The analysis of the 2004 GCSE examination results was good and key trends were identified, such as the large number of pupils who achieved three or four higher grades and several grade Ds. The academy also identified that lower-attaining pupils were making relatively better progress than their higher-attaining peers. This information was used well to challenge the teaching and learning styles that were currently in use. Key Stage 2 and 3 test data has been used well to predict GCSE grades and set targets against which to track the pupils' progress.

A comprehensive system of teacher assessments, made three times a year, is used appropriately to monitor the pupils' academic progress, their personal development and to predict whether the academy is on track to achieve its academic targets; using this information, confident predictions have been made that the proportion of the pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A\* to C in 2005 will be about twice that in 2004. Intervention strategies are organised and monitored well, and have helped to address barriers to raising standards; the pupils and their parents are kept suitably informed of the standards being achieved. Academic monitoring days have proved valuable, with around 80 per cent of parents attending, compared with half this figure for parents' evenings at the predecessor school.

It is intended that end-of-key stage targets are supplemented by short-term, subject-specific targets given as part of marking to create the stepping stones required for the pupils to reach their targets. The school is aware that the quality of marking varies too widely for this aim to be achieved. In lessons, marking varied widely in quality; too much work was not marked and too rarely were the pupils helped by written guidance to identify the next stage in their learning.

New facilities, such as the learning resource centre, are valued by the pupils and used well to support the completion of coursework and homework. Strategies, such as booster and revision classes and additional lessons after school, are used to help the pupils achieve their targets. Sensibly, the academy is keeping study leave to a minimum by maintaining lessons during the GCSE examination period.

Under the outstanding leadership of the principal, the academy's managers have formed an impressive team to establish and develop the school. The principal has an excellent understanding of the issues facing the academy. His calm optimism in the face of difficulties associated with the new buildings has ensured that the pupils' achievement has remained central at all times. The three vice-principals lead their areas with confidence and evident passion. This senior team has set a clear vision for the academy's future development, which is shared and understood by the staff, pupils and the wider community. The senior managers are outward looking, ensuring that productive relationships within the local community, and further afield, offer the pupils numerous opportunities for their development. A positive and productive relationship has been maintained with the LEA and the Education Action Zone, which includes the academy. The academy's sponsor and the governing body provide effective and generous support for the academy.

The development plan is a successful tool for staging actions, ensuring that a climate to foster learning and promote the pupils' personal development has been carefully built. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were identified as a significant barrier at the academy's inception. A structured approach to behaviour management has been successfully introduced and appropriately reviewed and modified. Both staff and pupils have been trained in the academy's approach and expectations. During this visit, the pupils' attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory or better in 18 lessons, including 12 where they were good or very good. Most pupils were keen to learn and enthusiastic, working well with one another. In the

two lessons where the pupils' approach was unsatisfactory, most were compliant but several pupils chose to do little. Around the academy, the pupils are mainly sensible and friendly, responding very well to the greetings and interest shown by the large numbers of staff consistently evident. The pupils were welcoming and courteous to visitors. The pupils, who were interviewed, reported the improvement in behaviour as one of the key achievements of the new school. They spoke warmly of the many opportunities which were available to them and were clearly proud of the academy and ambitious for their own achievement.

Further action which the academy should consider:

- continuing to improve the quality of teaching by taking greater account of how the pupils learn most effectively;
- reviewing the schemes of work to ensure that they meet the needs of all the pupils.

The academy is making good progress in implementing its development plan and has the capacity to achieve a high quality of provision.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Academies Division at the DfES. This letter will also be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

**LOUISE SODEN**  
**HM Inspector of Schools**

cc chair of governors  
the Academies Division, DfES