



15 December 2005

Ms P Millichamp
Principal
Lambeth Academy
Elms Road
London
SW4 9ET

Dear Ms Millichamp

ACADEMIES INITIATIVE: MONITORING VISIT TO LAMBETH ACADEMY

Introduction

Following my visit with Robert Ellis HMI to your academy on 24 and 25 November 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

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

This letter will be published on the Ofsted website. If the letter contains any factual inaccuracies, please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider within 24 hours of the date of this letter.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of documents and met with the principal, the vice principal and other senior leaders, the chair of governors and a representative of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined.

Context

The academy opened in September 2004 with 184 Year 7 pupils only. This September, a further 180 pupils joined in Year 7. The academy employed 11 new teachers from the start of this academic year, bringing the total number of teaching staff to 27. This rise in the numbers of pupils and teachers is set to continue in the coming years until the academy has around 1300 pupils. At 32%, the proportion of the pupils who have learning difficulties and

disabilities is around twice the national average, as is the proportion who have Statements of Special Educational Need. The academy has a diverse pupil population and at 17%, the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high; 14 pupils are at the early stages of learning to speak English.

Achievement and standards

The pupils' standards on entry to the academy are below average overall. The academy's intake includes an average proportion of higher-attaining pupils, but there are fewer middle-attaining pupils and many more lower-attaining pupils than is the case in most schools. Because of its recent opening, the academy has no national test results, but teachers' assessments show that whilst standards are below average, the pupils' progress is reasonable. Boys achieve less well than girls but the difference is similar to the national picture. In lessons, most pupils made at least satisfactory progress and many made good progress. In a Year 8 English lesson, for example, middle and lower-attaining pupils concentrated on their written work well; by the end of the lesson many could analyse with confidence the changes in a character from their class reading book. The pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities make similar progress to their peers. In a Year 8 girls' physical education lesson, for example, through good support from the teacher and other pupils, all developed their football dribbling skills well and participated actively. However, around one in four pupils has weak reading and comprehension skills and this impedes their progress.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are satisfactory. In lessons, the pupils generally settled to their work without fuss and engaged with activities quickly. Most listened attentively to their teachers and peers, showing respect and commenting sensibly on each other's ideas. A few pupils, however, engaged in low-level disruption by talking out of turn, tapping pens, fiddling with equipment and being generally inattentive. Although not widespread, this behaviour continued for too long where it was not challenged consistently and learning suffered. The pupils are courteous to each other, their teachers and visitors to the academy. Although not a large space, the dining room is used appropriately by the pupils; they queue up sensibly and socialise well whilst eating. The pupils generally move around the academy without disturbing others' learning, but often they take too long to get to lessons and this delays a prompt start. However, punctuality to the academy in the mornings is reasonable.

The pupils develop a sound moral code; most know how they can play a productive part in the school community. The assembly programme and more recently implemented 'thought for the day' in tutor periods are well planned and involve pupils appropriately.

At 92.7%, the rate of attendance is just above the national average for secondary schools; this reflects the pupils' generally positive approach to the academy and appreciation of the opportunities they are given. Since opening, the academy has excluded 3 pupils permanently and 29 on a fixed-term basis.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teaching was satisfactory or better in nearly all lessons, but the proportion of good or better lessons was a little low. Generally, not enough use is made of assessment information to plan lessons that meet the needs of all the pupils. However, outstanding teaching was observed in art. The quality of the pupils' learning was closely linked to the quality of teaching they experienced.

In the good and better lessons, the teachers explained the learning objectives clearly and provided a wide range of activities that captured the pupils' interests. The pace was brisk and the tasks were well matched to the pupils' needs. The pupils were provided with good opportunities to work in pairs or groups to develop their speaking and listening skills. Effective questioning was used to identify what the pupils knew and understood, and the teacher built on the pupils' responses productively. Pupils were encouraged to become independent learners and the plenary session at the end of the lessons was used well to promote self-evaluation, and for the teacher to assess the pupils' learning and to correct any misconceptions.

In the weaker lessons, low-level disruptive behaviour was not managed effectively and this limited the progress that some pupils made. The pace of these lessons was too varied, and tasks and resources were not well matched to the pupils' needs or capabilities. Learning objectives were too often broad and pupils were not given criteria to assess their own achievements against. Questions were generally put to volunteers, so many of the pupils remained passive during whole-class discussions. The teacher's and pupils' expectations of what they could achieve were sometimes too low and planning did not

identify how much time was allocated to sections of the lesson. As a result, activities went on too long, too little time was made for the concluding plenary session and pupils were released late for their next lesson.

Marking is conscientious and generally provides good advice as to how work can be developed. However, it is not always clearly focussed on the learning objectives and sometimes results in an accumulation of too many points for improvement.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and the compulsory extension lesson at the end of the day provides good opportunities for pupils to widen or consolidate their learning. The academy also offers a comprehensive enrichment programme, which operates on the last day of the eleven-day timetable cycle. Activity days in term and holiday periods offer further opportunities for pupils to engage in activities to complement what they have learned in lessons; they include visits to places of interest, sometimes accompanied by the parents. Useful links are being formed with the academy's very near neighbour, Lambeth College, in preparation for some joint provision for the pupils from Year 9 onwards. All subjects have identified opportunities for pupils to develop key skills and each pupil is compiling a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate their achievements. This process is at an early stage but it is planned that it will form part of the assessment to enable all pupils to gain a formal qualification. However, although key skills have been signposted in each unit of work, generally the planning for lessons does not make specific reference to them. Homework is well planned and organised and pupils are now completing assignments more successfully than last year.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the academy are satisfactory. The principal has set out an inclusive vision that is based on providing a wide range of opportunities for the pupils. The senior leadership team has supported her well. The academy has made a reasonable start in realising this vision, although there remains much to be done to ensure a consistent approach to some aspects of teaching and in evaluating the strategies followed to raise achievement. The review of progress against the development plan indicates which actions have been completed and goals met, but does too little to analyse the academy's performance so far, or to put forward its response to areas that have proved slower to improve. However, the senior leadership team has a reasonably accurate view of the

academy's strengths and areas for development, and has the means to make further improvements.

The academy has focused on some appropriate strategies to raise the pupils' achievements in a number of areas; for example, the design of the curriculum and the need to ensure that the pupils' behaviour supports their learning well. The curriculum is providing a good range of opportunities for the pupils in and out of lessons. A clear set of expectations for the pupils' behaviour has been drawn up; these have been published to pupils and parents, and most teachers apply the rewards and sanctions effectively. However, the senior leadership team has not been effective enough in ensuring that all teachers take a consistent approach to managing low-level disruption in lessons. The academy has a large amount of information on the pupils' attainment and potential, but it does not use it effectively enough to monitor the progress of groups of pupils, or to evaluate the provision it makes for them, for example, the extension lessons for the gifted and talented.

The governing body has made a good start in establishing itself since the academy opened. The chair of governors has an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development. He recognises, for example, the need for the academy to make the local community more aware of its work. He keeps in touch with the views of its parents well. The governors have received appropriate training on areas where they lack experience.

External support

The academy has drawn support from a wide range of sources, including the DfES, its sponsor the United Learning Trust, independent consultants and the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency. It has managed the support well, and although it is early days, there are indications that provision has improved as a result, for example, in setting up the flexible learning centre following consultation with the adviser from the DfES.

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

- Improve the use of assessment information in evaluating the success of actions taken.
- Improve the quality of teaching by better matching the pupils' work to their different needs.
- Ensure that all teachers have a consistent approach to managing the low-level disruptive behaviour of some pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Sean Harford
HM Inspector of Schools