



13 February 2007

Mrs Lynn Gadd  
Principal  
Harefield Academy  
Northwood Way  
Harefield, Uxbridge  
UB9 6ET

Dear Mrs Gadd

## **ACADEMIES INITIATIVE: MONITORING VISIT TO HAREFIELD ACADEMY**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with David Jones HMI and Clive Barnett HMI to the academy on 30 and 31 January 2007, 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 and met with the principal, representatives of the governing body, senior leaders, other nominated staff and groups of students.

### **Context**

Harefield Academy opened in September 2005 and was created following the closure of John Penrose School. The academy has a specialism in sport, health and wellbeing and has 563 students enrolled. It currently has a small sixth form consisting of 54 students. The academy is based on the site of the predecessor school. Most of the academy's current accommodation is of poor quality, though it is very well managed and is treated with respect by students. In early 2006 a state-of-the-art dry training football facility and an outdoor Astroturf pitch were completed. However, there has been a serious delay in the completion of the rest of the academy buildings. It is now expected that these will be completed for September 2008. The academy

draws students from a wide variety of backgrounds. At 20%, the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average. Some 32%, a very high proportion, are on the academy's special educational needs register. About 58% of the students are boys.

The most significant challenges facing the academy are to raise the overall standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE, and the delay in the completion of the new buildings.

### **Achievement and standards**

Standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 were below national averages in 2006. However, given their starting points, students made progress that was better than that found nationally, particularly in Years 10 and 11. There was no significant difference in the achievement of different ethnic groups. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers. Given students' prior attainment, achievement and standards in the sixth form are satisfactory.

In national tests at the end of Year 9, there have been improvements in the standards achieved in English and mathematics, though not in science. Evidence from the work of students in Year 8, the first new year group to be admitted to the academy, indicates good progress in all core subjects.

There are early indications from the results of completed GCSE modular tests for examination in 2007 that there has been a significant rise in standards in science, music and information and communication technology (ICT) in Year 11. The good systems that the academy uses to track and monitor students' progress also endorse this picture of rising standards.

The senior leadership team is fully aware of the reasons for weaknesses and has good plans to address them. There are ambitious, but achievable, targets set for examination results over the next three years.

### **Personal development and well-being**

Students regard the academy as a safe place to learn. They respect and care for each other well. There are few instances of bullying and those that do occur are dealt with swiftly and effectively. There is an evident spirit of mutual respect between students and teachers. Most students have a very good attitude to learning. They behave well in lessons and are keen to do

well, especially in the better lessons. Behaviour around the academy is good. Students move calmly and sensibly around the academy and most arrive punctually to lessons. Most students look smart and wear the recently introduced uniform with pride. Attendance has continued to improve and is now satisfactory.

Students, particularly the older ones, have benefited greatly from the programmes provided by "Humanutopia." Designed to help young people develop leadership qualities and to prepare for adult life through events such as social enterprise projects, these programmes are valued highly by students and staff. They support citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE) courses very effectively. They have been particularly effective in supporting students in Years 10/11 to develop as role models for younger students. House assemblies help students develop their understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. Students are involved in raising money for overseas charities through, for example, the sale of redundant mobile phones and they help with sports days at a local primary school.

Most students know how to develop healthy lifestyles. The academy has made good progress in providing healthy food at breakfast and at lunch times. The take-up of these healthy options is good. The impact of the sports specialism of the academy can be seen in the wide range of sporting activities on offer before lessons start, at break times and after school. This also makes a major contribution to students' healthy lifestyles.

Care, guidance and support are organised well and are effective. The tracking of students' progress is detailed and most students are aware of their academic targets in most subjects. Most are also aware of what they need to do to improve their work. The "Student Voice" website, developed and run by sixth form students, and associated "blogs" provide students with an opportunity to contribute to debates involving issues affecting the academy. Whilst this facility is used relatively well there are no mechanisms for students as a whole to contribute formally to developments within the academy.

The sixth form is currently small. Staff know each student well, and care, guidance and support are good. The academy provides good advice to Year 11 students on option choices in the sixth form. This is focused on finding the right course or courses for each individual student. Induction to the sixth form is effective and students are helped to develop study and life skills. Advice on options after the sixth form is good and students feel involved in the life of the academy. As a result, numbers are rising and set to rise even more rapidly next year.

Harefield Academy aims to meet the needs of every individual student. The work that takes place in the inclusion centre is outstanding. It is highly effective in supporting students who may be experiencing a wide range of difficulties and is very successful in helping them return to their usual classes. The centre contains an impressive display of students' work and has a very caring yet purposeful ethos. The day is organised imaginatively, based on the needs of individual students. Students enjoy working hard in the inclusion centre and the quality of work produced during their lessons is good.

### **Quality of provision**

Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Over a half of the lessons observed were good; a small number were outstanding. Inspectors saw no inadequate teaching.

A key feature of the better lessons is the high expectations that teachers have of what students can achieve. With this in mind, teachers plan interesting activities that challenge students appropriately, they maintain a fast pace and keep students working hard. Teachers ask probing questions to check that students are learning effectively and that they understand the points being made. Students enjoy being kept busy and respond very well to the teacher's enthusiasm and belief in what they can achieve. In these lessons students are very keen to do well, and generally make good progress.

In the less effective lessons, teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low. These lessons often contain a narrow range of activities that go on for too long, leading to students losing focus and concentration. As a result, whilst progress is satisfactory in these lessons, students do not achieve as much as they could. The more able students sometimes finish their work sooner than their peers and are not always given sufficiently challenging additional work to complete.

The quality of the curriculum is good; it provides appropriate opportunities for all learners to progress well and reflects the academy's specialist sports, health and wellbeing status. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced. Two modern foreign languages, drama and integrated humanities are offered in Years 7. In Year 9 students can choose to spend more time studying media, performing arts, physical education or French. All students take a common core of subjects at Key Stage 4 and select from a range of 19 academic and vocational courses, many of which reflect the academy's sports specialism. Additional work-related courses and extended work experience

are provided to meet the needs of less academic students and those at risk of disaffection.

There is an effective, well-planned programme of personal and social education, including citizenship, which students value. Time is available for supported personal learning that allows students to focus their attention on homework, research or the development of learning skills under the guidance of a tutor. Although older students in these mixed age groups support each other well, the quality of the academic guidance provided by the tutors is inconsistent.

There are extensive and varied opportunities for enrichment activities, particularly in music and sport, with high levels of student participation. The breadth of extra-curricular provision, including outside visits continues to grow and adds considerable enjoyment to academy life.

### **Leadership and management**

The leadership and management of the academy are good. The principal has established a strong and practical vision for the future. She sets high standards and innovation is supported effectively. Good quality assurance procedures provide the evidence for rigorous self-evaluation which reflects accurately the academy's strengths and weaknesses. Information is used well to identify development priorities and the progress made in addressing areas of weakness demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement. The principal makes good use of the support available from the academy's sponsors to address areas requiring further development.

The academy development plan is clear and reflects agreed priorities. However, initially progress against some targets has not been as rapid as originally planned. Imaginative curriculum initiatives in science and maths are already in progress as part of the Independent State School Partnership (ISSP) with Merchant Taylor's School. The academy has developed good links with the local community and other external partners, in line with its vision and mission.

Overall, the work of the senior management team is good. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are rigorous and accurate. Senior managers direct improvement and promote the well-being of learners through good care, guidance and support. As a result, students generally display good attitudes to learning and respond positively to challenging and dynamic lessons. The

academy's focus on sport, health and wellbeing has resulted in significant curriculum development.

The standard of middle management is generally good. However, some curriculum departments of the academy are more dynamic than others. The development of a vibrant and sustainable sixth form presents a major challenge. Numbers are set to rise rapidly in the next academic year, but curriculum balance, academic guidance and support and course sustainability will require energetic and insightful leadership.

The governance of the academy is good. Sponsors and community representatives share the same vision and have a very good understanding of the academy's current strengths and its potential for the future. Resource management is good and the academy runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

### **External support**

The academy has developed exceptionally good links with Merchant Taylor's School under the ISSP. Links with other schools are developing well. These productive partnerships are managed well. The North Hillingdon Federation is in an early stage of development, although plans are developing for a 14-19 strategy. The committed sponsors have provided very good support for the academy's development. The principal has chosen to change the consultancy arrangements with commercial partners.

### **Main Judgements**

The academy has made good progress towards raising standards.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve the quality of teaching to that of the best
- Plan and put in place the structures necessary to support a rapidly expanding and vibrant sixth form.

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

Yours sincerely

Martyn Rhowbotham  
**HM Inspector of Schools**