



Haberdashers' Adams' Federation

*Members of the Family of Haberdashers' Schools
Adams' Grammar School & Abraham Darby Academy*

CEO Newsletter

Issue 1

Spring Term 2009

Dear Parents and Carers,

It is now 6 months since the Abraham Darby Academy opened and the Haberdashers' Adams' Federation was established with common governance over the two schools. At the last Full Governors' Meeting, it was suggested that I write to parents to update you (as concisely as possible!) on what has happened so far.



Basically the aim was to develop the concept of "Two Schools, one Vision", to develop an ethos and atmosphere at the Academy similar to that at Adams' and through the Federation to share best practice leading to further improvements and rising standards in both schools. At the same time it was accepted that the context of the two schools was different and that the curriculum would be different. In particular at Abraham Darby a curriculum is already beginning to be developed to meet the needs, spark the imagination and bring the best out of each individual student according to his/her ambition, aspirations, ability, interest and learning styles"



Under the enthusiastic leadership of Mr Hawke, the new Principal, and his Senior Leadership Team, the Haberdashers'/Adams' style and branding were established from the outset



through new signage, new prospectus, new website, Principals Newsletter, Academy stationery, student stationery and uniform. There was also a Haberdashers' Deputation early in the academic year. (In the future more 'state

occasions' will be developed similar to those at Adams' e.g. Speech Day, Carol Service etc.)

Students, staff, parents and the local community understand that they are now part of something that is distinctly different to what went before and are embracing the new ethos and culture with its increased expectations and raised targets. There were over 1,000 visitors at the Open Evening and preliminary indications suggest the Academy will be full in Year 7 next year. The Academy has just started to recruit students for the new Sixth form opening in September 2009 and once again early indications are very positive.

The vision, values and expectations of the Academy are clearly and consistently articulated through displays, electronic noticeboards, weekly newsletter, website, assemblies and press releases.



The consistent use of the 'language of outstanding' has served to raise the expectations and aspirations staff have of both themselves and their students. A self improvement culture is developing as evidenced by our own teachers leading training, the pursuit of professionally accredited qualifications and a Federation Teaching and Learning Group facilitating the sharing of best practice. Increased involvement with Initial Teacher Training via the Federation Training School is serving to keep discussion on pedagogy high on the agenda and proving positive in terms of recruitment.

The impact can be gauged through improved attendance, behaviour and student appearance;

the early entry exam successes which point to a significant improvement in results this summer and the positive feedback from students, parents and the local community.



As at Adams' the emphasis is on the development of 'the whole person'. The House System has been introduced as a mechanism to encourage participation and competition. Students are engaging with the weekly programme of inter-house activities, and a sense of 'House Identity' is developing. Inter House Sports competitions have taken place in Boys Football, Girls Football, Netball, Basketball, Cross Country and Badminton. Elsewhere Inter



House competitions have been organised by the English, History and DT departments and there have been 'Ab Dab's Got Talent', 'Where's Wally?', 'Christmas Tree Decoration' and 'Name the Member of Staff from a Childhood Photo' competitions. Over time the Inter House programme of activities will become more extensive and embrace all areas of the curriculum, and a comprehensive calendar of activities published at the start of each Academic Year.



Mr Hawke is explicit in his expectation that every member of staff contributes to the programme of curriculum enrichment and extra curricular activities. Involvement in Music/Dance/Drama is extensive. Elsewhere participation in Sport and subject based activities is beginning to develop. Academy teams took part in a Netball tournament at Haberdashers' Knights Academy



and have taken part in the Fraser Bird Sevens Tournament. There is a growing programme of curriculum enrichment activities e.g. Young Enterprise and the Arts Award and links with Adams' are helping to support the development of Debating, Science Clubs and hopefully in the near future the CCF. Student participation rates are being monitored.



Positions of leadership have been developed for students – Academy and House Captains, Prefects etc – and training provided. The Academy Council is in place, meeting regularly and branded as ADAT (Abraham Darby Academy Team). Prefects received leadership training and key individuals are leading ADAT. ADAT was involved in redesigning the Student Planner and in the appointment of Mr Hadley as the new Vice Principal. The Creative Partnerships 'Planning for Real' project has engaged a further group of students in the design process for the new Academy building. Tangible outcomes of the Student Voice are building and students are increasingly seeing themselves as important stakeholders in the Academy, but we are aware that mechanisms need to be developed to engage with a wider range of students.



The internal and external 'Celebration of Success' and the creation of a high praise culture are seen as key factors. A new Commendation system and Praise Postcards have been introduced. The Plasma screens, website and noticeboards are being used to promote and celebrate participation and achievement. Assemblies are routinely used to acknowledge and celebrate participation and achievement. The Weekly Principals Newsletters are being used to promote, acknowledge and celebrate students contributions and involvement. Consequently a 'cool to succeed' culture is developing amongst the students and the aspirations and expectation that staff have of the students is rising.

Given the enthusiastic leadership of Mr Barratt at Adams' and Mr Hawke at the Academy, and the wise counsel of the Governing Body, the concept of a Federation between the two schools is also developing.

Both Mr Barratt and Mr Hawke are thinking in the same way in terms of the development of mentoring and target setting in their schools in the future. Having attended a number of the Senior Leadership Training Days at the



Academy last summer, Mr Barratt has adapted the way individual subject targets are agreed with students at Abraham Darby to suit his purposes at Adams'. If these agreed targets are realised in this summer's public exams, we will see some remarkable results. We feel that it could be a major factor in continuing the year on year improvement in results and it is an excellent illustration of how both schools can benefit from the Federation.



The Training School is a major catalyst to enhance sharing between the two schools. The Training School Managers – Mr

Hadley last term and Mr Hickey this term, in their unique position of working in both schools and indeed in swapping posts – have been able to track the interactions that are taking place and to act as a catalyst in encouraging others. An audit of T&L has taken place in both schools which has been shared via the Federation T&L group. There are currently 6 student teachers working across both schools. The target is to raise the number of student

teachers in both schools under the Training School next year. Three Academy teachers and three Adams' teachers have received Training School bursaries – as part of the condition for the bursaries all are required to work across the Federation.



The SENCO from the Academy is going to run a series of lunchtime courses at Adams' on SEN. Staff from the Academy have also provided training in AGS on the Activote system and Behaviour Management.

A Federation Teaching and Learning Group is in place and meeting on a regular basis, with an agreed focus on group work, questioning techniques and AfL. Collaboration has resulted in the production and sharing of resources. The technology for observatory classrooms for both schools is now on order.

Links at student levels are also developing. Some of these have been catalogued here and in the newsletters of both schools, but many more are occurring informally and are not recorded. We set out at the start of the year with the aspiration of having one major Federation event



this academic year – a Joint Schools Concert at Longford this summer - with the idea that we would move towards one per term in the future. We have also identified the band has an outstanding extra curricular activity in the Academy and hope that AGS students will soon join.

All in all then, the Academy and the Federation have started well. We all recognise that there is still a lot to do. We have ambitious targets and our aim is to exceed them!

The motto will continue to be:

"You don't have to be ill to get better"

Jim Richardson
CEO

The Haberdashers' Adams' Federation