



The David Young Community Academy

Case study



Principal

Ros McMullen

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Introduction

The David Young Community Academy opened in September 2006, specialising in Design and the Built Environment. It doesn't select, either on the basis of faith or ability.

It replaced two under-achieving schools in Seacroft, eastern Leeds. Seacroft is a deprived area, and is home to one of the country's largest housing estates.

A higher than average proportion of students are entitled to free school meals and a similar proportion have learning difficulties.

The Academy is sponsored by the Church of England and has an ethos based on Christian values.



Raising aspirations

The David Young Community Academy is a calm, welcoming and orderly school where students line up quietly to start the school day and to go to lunch. And when their principal, Ros McMullan, enters the room, they stand to acknowledge her, looking smart in neat business-like uniforms.

Staff are everywhere – at the wide, sunny reception, in the large, open corridors, in the Learning Resource Centre. If a child decides to make an unscheduled excursion from the classroom, they don't get far before they're gently challenged and asked to return to their studies, or to go directly to a member of staff who will help them. Amazingly, it works. There are high spirits and a smattering of cheekiness – but certainly no shouting or temper tantrums.

Neither are there any bells. Lesson changes are signalled with calm music that plays over a period of calm of 10 minutes.

Everything is new and well cared for. The restaurant looks like a high street bistro, with smart furniture and a daily changing menu of healthy food, all lovingly prepared by the chef and his team.

Written in large letters across corridor walls and prospectus pages is the message, "Every student at DYCA will have the opportunity to apply to a top university and achieve honours".

And over the staffroom, the message on the wall reads: "We inspire knowledge, develop skills, inspire and kindle love. We dispense enthusiasm. We are touching and shaping tomorrow."

The pervading message of the David Young Community Academy is clear – everyone is expected to work hard, respect teachers and one another, and to achieve the very best they're capable of.

Doing things differently

Lessons

The David Young Community Academy day starts at 8.25am and finishes at 4.35pm, but many children arrive before, and stay on until later. At the Academy, there are only two lessons a day.

Principal Ros McMullan explains: "We don't have five one-hour lessons a day or six forty minute lessons a day. We have two lessons a day. We have a morning lesson and an afternoon lesson, and this cuts down on movement.

"It also means that the teaching is of a very high quality. It's very thought through, it's very planned, and learning is deep. Links are made between subject areas and students get enough time to embed their skills and to practise them. We also make sure that whatever students are learning, they're developing four very key skills. They're the skills of reflectiveness, resourcefulness, respect and resilience. Because what we say to the students is with those four skills, you become a great learner, and you can learn anything."

Understanding our Environment teacher Alan Betts adds: "The longer lesson time means that we can get more work done in that lesson. Especially in my subject – understanding the environment – where you have English, geography, history and RE included in one lesson. It's quite a broad area to cover. It definitely works. You can get a lot done in a lesson."

At the end of the Academy day, a range of 'Session Three' activities take place. These include more than 40 different clubs – including debating, young enterprise, fashion design, food tasting and chess – as well as extension classes.

The specialism

Principal Ros McMullan says that the specialism of Design and the Built Environment was chosen because Leeds is an area of regeneration.

The specialism has led to a number of interesting partnerships, including one with the Leeds College of Building.

Mrs McMullan explains: "Leeds has the only college of building in the country. It is a very, very successful college and the principal of the Leeds College of Building is on the governing body of the Academy and we work quite closely together. We have a shared facility which the Leeds College of Building manages. It is very close and practically on our site, which gives a very specialist resource to teach Level 2 and Level 3 Construction to our young people."



The results

Percentage of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, including maths and English

2001	10.3
2002	9.9
2003	3.9
2004	14.1
2005	14.7
2007 (First year of DYCA results)	21.1
2008 (Second year of DYCA results)	31.9
2009	29



OFSTED

OFSTED inspectors carried out a first monitoring visit to the David Young Community Academy on 31 January 2008.

Achievement and standards

Students' attainment on entry to the Academy is well below average and particularly so in the core subjects of English and mathematics. There are relatively few students with high levels of prior attainment.

Key Stage 4 standards in 2007, while below average, were above target with 42% of students attaining five good GCSE passes and 21% reaching this level including English and mathematics. When compared to the results of predecessor schools, these grades demonstrate good improvement. In addition, students made satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points and particularly when compared to their performance at Key Stage 3.

Three quarters of students attained five or more A* to G grades and over nine tenths gained at least one qualification. Both results represent satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

The academy has made good progress in bringing together students from different schools and backgrounds into one cohesive student body. Students speak very positively about the Academy and wear their uniforms with pride.

Students understand rules and the large majority conform to expectations. Robust procedures and a substantial staff presence help maintain good

behaviour in lessons and around the Academy. An increasing proportion of students are well motivated and behave well even when not closely observed. Relationships within the Academy are very positive. Lunchtimes are pleasant, social and well managed affairs providing opportunities for students to socialise and make new friends. Staff choose to eat their meals in the restaurant: they monitor behaviour and intervene if necessary.

The very good system of pastoral care does a great deal to help students feel safe, valued and well cared for.

Effective work has resulted in a steady improvement in attendance levels with Academy records indicating a 4% improvement to 87% in overall rates in 2007 compared to previously. Fixed term exclusions are still high but have declined, while permanent exclusions have reduced significantly.

Quality of provision

Good progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching. In most lessons seen, teaching was good.

Most teachers have very effective strategies to deal with difficult or challenging behaviour and ensure that the pace and focus of the lesson is maintained.

The Academy offers students a good curriculum which is carefully planned to ensure they receive their full entitlement to all subjects. It is increasingly innovative, offering a range of options which meet students' needs and interests. Significant care is given to customising course options for students.

Leadership and management

The governors, principal and senior leadership provide clear strategic direction and high ambition for the Academy. The highly effective leadership of the principal and the efficient and committed support she receives from the senior leadership team results in a collective determination to tackle the substantial legacy of under-achievement and low expectations.

Main judgements

The Academy has made good progress towards raising standards.

Food

Breakfast is provided free of charge for every child as part of the morning lesson.

Mrs McMullan says: "Food is a very important part of Academy life. We have two chefs working here – a head chef and a sous chef. We have a beautiful restaurant. We provide breakfast for free – at the moment it's winter so we're all eating lots of porridge, fresh fruit and fresh orange juice. At lunchtime the students choose from a healthy range of meals. We have over 95% of the students who actually stay and take an Academy meal because the food is of very high quality."

Faith

Although the David Young Community Academy is a Church of England school, it embraces all faiths and none.

Reverend Mark Umpleby is the DYCA chaplain. The school also has a multi-faith Worship Room, which is available to all students for group and private prayer, or just quiet reflection.

Nigel Greenwood, Governor and member of the Rippon and Leeds Diocese Education Board says: "As a multi-faith Academy, we're very clear that we value people and we respect them for their faith, or indeed if they don't have a faith. It's about this principle of respect for people's beliefs and it's about the values on which faiths are based and the values that are expressed through faith.

"We're not in the business of converting people or proselytising, we're serving a community and serving some of the most needy communities in this part of Leeds. That's the driving force. It's about service, and putting the Gospel into practice."

House system

Like many Academies, the David Young Community Academy has a house system, with a head boy and girl and prefects. However, it is unique in providing all students and their families with a 'best friend' or 'house parent', known as Team Leaders in the school. They support students and families so that all children are encouraged to reach for the very highest standards.

The Academy has a very strict uniform code, which was developed by the students themselves. Every child wears a black trouser suit. Boys have a lime green tie and girls have a lime green cravat. There are even uniform black nylon school bags, complete with school logo.

Uniform is only available through the school, where it is available to parents at cost price.

Head girl Demie, 15, says: "I really like the uniform it makes us look really smart and I really like the green because it goes with the black."

The uniform



Head boy Lee adds: "When you're walking down the street, people realise where you're from and we really set an example of how a school should look. We look a lot better than before. If the uniform looks good then you feel better in yourself when you're walking down the street. You feel more comfortable."

The people



**Ros McMullan,
Principal**

Traditionally, children who come from our postcodes – which are areas of deprivation – don't do very well in education. They don't go on to achieve very high GCSEs or A Levels or go on to university. But we don't believe that people's potential is determined by their postcode, and in fact, if we put in extra effort and give them the very best of everything, we're proving that these children here can achieve. So we've only been open two years and yet 70% of our young people got five or more good GCSEs, and every single one of our sixth formers went to their first choice of university in 2008. So we're really excited about what we're doing for the potential of young people here. We're hoping that by giving them the best teaching and the best resources, and the best form of leadership that we possibly can, that we will actually transform the whole area.

The Academy has substantially raised standards in that we expect that children will wear a very smart uniform, that they will behave appropriately, that they will walk on the left, that they will be calm, that they will eat sensibly. We make sure that the standards we expect of them are the highest, and we also make sure that they are provided with the very best of everything. And those two things together have really improved the way that these children are perceived by other people and the way they perceive themselves.

If you look at our students, they look very proud of themselves. They're very smart. They know they go to a good school, and they know the expectations of them and their behaviour are of a very high standard. They know we expect them to do well and go to university.

I'm exceptionally proud of my staff and my students. I'm exceptionally proud of their aspirations for each other and for their Academy.



**Demie, 15,
Head Girl**

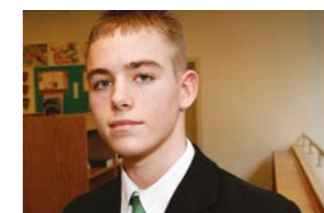
What I really like about being here at the Academy is that all the lessons are really long – two and a half hours, which lets you do a lot more work and learn a lot more.

I feel very proud to come to this Academy. I really enjoy coming here. I just really like it here.

I'm studying maths, English, science and RE, and BTEC sport, and BTEC media – which I'll be doing GCSEs in as well next year. I plan to be a midwife – that's what I really want to be.

I like all my teachers at this Academy. They're really nice. They help you a lot. If you need to stay behind in school, they'll stay with you and help. They're very dedicated to the job.

My parents believe it's excellent, what I'm achieving at the Academy. They see that all my goals are high and that I seem to be achieving all of them. The biggest thing I've achieved that I'm really proud of is getting a B in all my coursework for my English. I never thought I'd be able to do that because I wasn't really good at English.



**Lee, 15,
Head Boy**

The sporting facilities are really good, and the chances to go to places and do things. They're a lot better than in a normal school. We get to do a lot of fun stuff. We've got a lot on offer such as rugby, football and basketball and sports like trampolining and karate.

I'm doing maths, English and science, but I'm also studying a BTEC in performing arts, and an unusual one called firefighting, which is quite fun. When I leave school I plan to join the Royal Marines. I did my psychometric test for it the other week, but my maths let me down, so I have to take it again in six months. There's an ex Army officer here, Mrs Ferris, and she's going to help me with my exam booklet.

Firefighting is where we go to the local fire station and learn the skills that they do. I wasn't too good on ladders when we started, but I've overcome that fear now. With it being an Academy you get a lot more facilities, like computers. You learn a lot more than at other schools.

Our teachers get us to push ourselves. If you think you can get a C, they'll try to get you a B so that it looks better on your CV when you leave school.

My parents are really proud of me and they've seen a big change in me since I started at the school. Before I didn't really care much about school, but now I enjoy coming to school.

The people (cont.)

Curtis Johns, Student, Year 10

Curtis was the star of the school's Joseph production last year. He has performed at the city's town hall, and has written six musicals and more than 100 songs.

He says: "I started singing and playing piano in primary school. When I went to my previous high school, that didn't have a piano so I had to stop. The music facilities here are great so I was able to pick it up again.

"I want to be a music teacher. Hopefully I want to teach here. I'm studying for my diploma in music, which is the equivalent of four GCSEs. Then next year I'm going to do some more stuff and then get my grades up on my piano – I'm going to try to get to Grade 5."

Denise Howland, Parent

I have two boys in the Academy. One in Year 11, Dale, and one in Year 10, Declan.

Dale loves his sport, he's very good at it. He's just done some foundation papers, his exam papers, and he's passed on both of them in maths. He got Cs on them, which is the highest grade you could get, so we're very proud of him.

There's a very nice atmosphere here at the Academy. It's very warm and friendly and if you have any problems, you can go and see anyone. There are always staff walking about.



Sharon and Jonathan McManus, Parents

Sharon

She wants to be a police woman. She's always wanted to do that, ever since she was a kid.

From going from primary school to here, the sports facilities here are a lot different here from your standard primary. She absolutely adores it. She does trampolining, she does gymnastics, she does a bit of street dance, and rugby – she loves her rugby. She likes art as well, she loves the art department, and she's just made some book ends in technology. She's done pottery too – she made a little gargoyle.

She's very, very happy here. She loves it. She seems to have blossomed since coming here – she's not a baby any more, she's heading towards becoming a young lady. It's the way she carries herself. The uniform helps with that as well because it makes them feel that they're a little bit older. The Academy uniform is a bit different, it's a bit more business. It's like how she carries her school bag. She doesn't just have it slung over her shoulder any more. She's actually posing!

I like the fact that they're all very smart, coming to school looking the same. No matter where you live you can see that they're coming to our Academy because of how they're dressed and how they are.

Jonathan

It takes away a lot of the kids being bullied. It takes away any worries about your kid being bullied for what she's wearing. They're all the same and that's much better. Girls have their little cravats, and boys have their ties – the kids quite like it.

The staff are fantastic – how they are with the kids, how they are with the other members of staff and the parents – they're absolutely fantastic. The facilities are fantastic too. Before coming here, some of the kids had never seen, or had access to, some of the things they have here.

Charlie's not standing in the background, she's diving straight in. It's got her so much out of herself coming here.

Sharon

She's doing things she didn't even realise she liked. She's joined the rugby team. She's joined the street dance class – though she's never danced before. She's made leaps ahead in art – she loves it. She likes trampolining, which she's never been able to do before. We've only got a little garden, so we've never had a trampoline, but she's got a great big one here to bounce around on. The Academy's been really good for her. It's been brilliant.

The people (cont.)



**Paula Ibetson,
Parent**



**Andy Renshaw,
Music Teacher**

My name's Paula Ibetson and I have a son called Ashton in Year 10. My son loves his rugby.

The atmosphere is lovely and there are lots of staff so if a child has a problem, there is always someone who will pick up on that. Children will be children – there's good behaviour and there's bad behaviour, but there are staff available always to put them where they should be, and to make sure that they're making the right choices.

As an Academy we're going to fund instrumental lessons and tuition free for all the students. We're going to provide free hire of the instruments as well, so there will be no cost to the kids at all.

There's a lot of talent here. We had a student perform at Leeds Town Hall recently on their Steinway piano. Me and a few members of staff went along to support him – it was wonderful.

We certainly have children here who have the potential to have music as a career. We have a lot of good singers, and we have students who are really talented at media and musical technology.

We have a recording studio which our students can just come into and record what they do, whether it's a performance or a competition. They can video it, and they can upload it to the internet. We have our own record label – DYCA Productions – so our students are all signed to our own record label. We're hoping to develop this into a more serious record label for young students, to give them some opportunity to get exposure and a step up into the industry, which is also what we're here for.

I was quite determined that our students would be able to access professional facilities so there's a classroom full of mixing desks and synthesisers and music technology. We have a reasonably professional system using LogicPro.

At Key Stage 3 we have a mixed curriculum to make it broad and fun and varied. It's got to be creative and practical and engaging. We'll spend a few weeks doing African drumming, we'll maybe do some Indian music, we'll certainly do functional keyboard skills because keyboards today are the interface by which most musicians access computer music so having some kind of keyboard skills is essential.

We also do Rock School with guitars, electric guitars and drums, and we're also working with a system called GigaJam at the moment, which is an online lessons application. It allows students to access 40 lessons on each instrument. All they'll need to do is connect to our site at home or from any computer and they can access all these instrumental lessons, so if they want to borrow an instrument to take home and practise for the weekend and sit down and have four or five guitar lessons over the weekend online, then we can provide that for them as well.

Students here have a huge array of musical opportunities. We have a keyboard room, practice rooms, a recording studio, free instrument hire and free lessons. The music facilities are set up to give students as much professional equipment as we can. They get access to real blend of traditional music making, different cultures, and different genres and styles of music. They also get access to modern music making through music making technology.

We did our first musical production here last year. We did Joseph, which was absolutely fantastic. We put together a really good cast of kids and worked very hard with staff on evenings and weekends and we came in during the holidays to build the set. We're now doing Oliver as our second production. We're really trying to get the community involved and make sure that it's something the community can look forward to.

I was blown away by the raw talent we have here. We have songwriting skills, and some of the students have real emotional maturity that they're able to express with their music. My role is identifying that talent, taking it and developing it.

I feel really proud of my students every day coming here to work at the Academy. There are some outstanding highlights – things like the school concerts and the productions. But there are also smaller things that make me proud – the achievements we see in classrooms on an individual level, and the fact that they're happy to share and celebrate those achievements. It gives you a real sense of fulfilment, and it's a very rewarding thing to do.

The people (cont.)



**Adam Appleby,
Drama, Humanities
and Literacy**

In drama in Key Stage 3 we do a lot of issue led work. My Year 8s are doing a unit on justice, which focuses on the Craig and Bentley story from the 1950s, about what is justice. Is it justice what happened to Derek Bentley? The pupils really engage with that and they really like it. It's a way of investigating what is right and wrong. It helps them to understand.

We also try to make drama as fun as possible, because a lot of our children don't get to use their imagination outside of the school because they're maybe a full time carer outside of school. So if they can have fun, use their imagination like children should do, that's half of my job done. As long as they learn a few things along the way, then that's great for me.

I want my students to be rounded people, rather than a person that has a piece of paper that says they have seven or eight exams, I want them to go away knowing how to be a real person and how to survive in a culture that is so volatile and so conscious of itself. I love it when you have a challenging student who gets interested in a subject. Or if a pupil comes to me with a problem and I can help in any way, then that's great.

The humanities subject area is a fantastic idea. It's run alongside the English department. It's where you have history, geography, politics, sociology, RE, economics... everything all run in one. Especially for

Year 7s, and Key Stage 3 as a whole, it makes the transition from primary school to secondary school a lot better and a lot easier, because they see the same teacher a lot of the time, and they do a lot of subjects all in one little bubble. It makes it easier for them to swallow too, because they're not going from one subject to another subject, to another and losing 70% of what they've learned. If they're doing it all in one room with one teacher that they like, then they're going to take a lot more in and they're going to understand it a lot more.

We follow a topic. The topic I'm following at the moment is kingship – what does it mean to be a king, what is a good king. So we've done Macbeth – which is literacy. We've done the Battle of Hastings.

We did another topic of natural disasters. So one project we set was to tell the students they had £70,000, there's going to be a disaster in 10 years, go and do something about it. So they have to look at the politics – where does the money go, why does it go there rather than another place. They also have to look at the history – we looked at the Tsunami of 2005. We also looked at how earthquakes and volcanoes work, so there's geography and geology in there as well. They really like it because you can apply it to something, rather than having a very dry lesson on plate tectonics. It's almost like the kids don't realise that they're learning.



**Nigel Greenwood,
Governor and member
of the Rippon and
Leeds Diocese
Education Board**

I am Chair of the Rippon and Leeds Diocesan Board of Education, and the diocese is of course the sponsor of the Academy. My background is further education and some time ago I was Chair of Governors at Agnes Stuart, which was one of the schools which closed and fed into the David Young Community Academy.

My work is very strongly influenced by the fact that I am a Christian. Most of my working life has been in the further education sector, and I think those two come together because it's about developing potential, valuing people and creating opportunities.

I think the Academy has improved the life opportunities for the students here by developing their potential, by raising their aspirations, by having expectations of them both personally and academically, with the opportunities that it offers. I think the key word is excellence. It's also about the resources and the facilities – they're just outstanding.

I think as a governor of one of the former schools, in some ways there's no comparison. The Academy has really freed up the opportunities for developing learning, for meeting the needs of individuals. And of course, all the resources that come with it – you've only to look at this building, it's magnificent. And of course, the way that it's valued and respected by the students as well.

The people (cont.)



**Keith Madeley,
Chair of Governors**

For many years I've chaired various corporate bodies and organisations in the voluntary sector and I believe that that experience has enabled me to work with the Principal and her team and my fellow governors to ensure that we deliver policy at the David Young Community Academy. It's very, very interesting when one talks to the children and to their parents, and we find situations where the children were really struggling. Now they've been at the Academy for 12 months or two years the difference is phenomenal. You can just see it and feel this, walking around the Academy and talking to the students.

I was asked by the Arch Deacon of Leeds, who I've worked with on different projects in the past to consider joining the governing board and perhaps considering the position of the Chair of Governors. It was suggested I came to the Academy to have a look for myself, and within minutes of standing in the reception area and seeing the students wandering around I was infected. And I felt this was something I wanted to do, to help try to make a difference for the students in the Academy.





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