

insight

Newsletter • Issue 5 • Spring 2010



Welcome

This is our second Insight for this academic year. It is proving to be a really exciting year too. I have been keeping you informed through the Insight on the changes to the building and, as you are aware, we have been gradually moving into the very high-quality temporary buildings.

There is a comprehensive article in this newsletter telling you about the temporary building, but I just wanted to highlight the fact that we are now using the much improved dining room and kitchen facilities. The new facilities are very popular with the students and at last they are being provided with high quality accommodation for both academic and social use.

The decant from the old Sports Hall, Modern Languages block, Art block and dining room, which happened over the February half term, has enabled our construction company, Willmott Dixon, to commence demolition. Consequently, much of our front of site has now been partitioned off to enable the building programme to get under way. We have an excellent relationship with Willmott Dixon and they are a construction company with vast experience of working on educational establishments. The plans for the new build are really exciting and we are looking forward to eventually moving into the new buildings in September 2011. It will be at that point that the buildings we are currently occupying will be demolished, to enable an all weather pitch, car park and car maintenance workshop to be constructed.

We are making every effort to keep you informed about things that are happening in the Academy by having several methods of communication. Student planners are used as a very personalised medium for contact, other methods include letters from staff,

letters from me, this Insight etc. Parentmail is a relatively new way of us making contact with you. By sending home electronic copies of communication to you we are alleviating the problem of lost hard copies, or letters that are left to fester in the bottom of students' bags. Whilst we are happy to continue to send home hard copies to parents who do not have use of a computer at home, providing we have parent email addresses we can send home electronic copies of communication. If you have not yet received anything via parentmail but you would like to have this put in place for you, please provide us with your email address by contacting us on: info@harrisfalconwood.org.uk

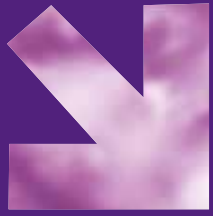
Attendance has really improved over the last 18 months. Thank you very much to the parents who have been really supportive with this, particularly during the snow. Improved attendance has had an extremely positive impact on learning. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank parents for your continued support regarding a high quality of uniform.

Enjoy the latest edition of our Insight. I hope you all have a restful Easter break and that we can all look forward to some better weather during the Summer Term.

Best Wishes

Ms T Askew – Principal





The Harris Federation Student Commission



Learning about Learning No.10 Downing Street Launch



Wednesday 14th October 2009

As part of the Student Commission on Learning, Commissioners from across the Harris Federation have created a publication entitled: 'Learning about Learning', documenting the first year of the Commission's findings in relation to learning in the Harris Academies. This publication has generated huge amounts of interest, as the Student Commission project is one of very few taking place in the UK, or indeed, anywhere else around the world.

The British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown became aware of the project, and, as a result, he invited the Student Commissioners, along with NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) who have been working with the Commission in research and development of its ideas and strategies, to launch the publication at No.10 Downing Street.

Due to their hard work and outstanding contributions to the work of the Student Commission, and its activities within the previous academic year, Chloe Golding, Kieran Simpson and Paul Murphy were selected to represent Harris Academy Falconwood at the 'Learning about Learning' publication launch, hosted by the Prime Minister's wife, Sarah Brown. The launch took place at 10 Downing Street and was followed by a discussion and reflection session at NESTA head-office in Holborn. The students received a guided tour of "No. 10", where we then not only met Sarah Brown, but were also able to sit on the

Prime Minister's chair in the cabinet room and visit all the rooms in this famous house.

The students' behaviour was exemplary, highlighted by Sarah Brown "tweeting" about the Commission and its work. She mentioned how impressed she was by the Student Commissioners, their thoughtfulness and their outstanding knowledge and understanding of how learning can be improved across the Harris Federation and in other schools in the UK.

This publication launch and visit to No. 10 Downing Street highlighted the huge impact the Student Commission's work is beginning to have, not just in the Harris Federation of Academies, but in the corridors of Whitehall and in educational circles around the world.

Please keep your eyes and ears open for more Student Commission news in the future – you might even be able to get involved yourself!

Mr K O'Brien – Teacher of PE

on Learning

Research Trip to New York

During the week prior to the half term break (6th February – 13th February) the Harris Student Commission on Learning conducted the first of its two international research visits to the United States. This particular trip was to New York City, with the second trip planned to take place to San Diego.

Chloe Golding (8AS) and Paul Murphy (8BB) travelled to New York with 5 other teachers and 7 other students from the Harris Federation. The visit was aimed at researching how New York City schools approach 'innovation' in relation to education and how this promotes and benefits learning.

We met with representatives from the city's Department of Education at their headquarters, who gave us a presentation about the background to New York City's education system and how it has improved since the appointment of Chancellor Klein, who has had a hugely positive impact on schools and ultimately learning and progress for students across the city's five boroughs.

Our first school visit was to the New York iSchool – a selective and very different school to what we are used to at the Harris Academies. Students are very much in control of their progress and learning, as students take 'courses' which involve project-based learning (where more than one subject is involved in the project), rather than the traditional subject-based lessons that we are used to in British secondary schools. Technology is also a very big part of the iSchool, with most lessons involving 'moodle' – an online learning space quite similar to our Harris Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) which students and teachers at Harris Academy Falconwood have started to use this term.

On the Tuesday of that week, the Commission was forced to stay in the hotel, as 10cm of snow fell in 1 day!! After working hard on creating our presentation for the Department of Education at the end of the week, we did manage to venture outside for a snowball fight with a few locals!

The second school we visited was the Harlem Children's Zone. This is a concept of education that aims to educate students in the same environment, or school, right from reception, all the way through until they graduate from high school (secondary school in the UK). We observed a very positive and supportive environment, where teachers and students worked in partnership in lessons and learning was clearly benefiting from this excellent relationship. Students work was constantly on display combined with motivating quotations, creating an environment where students were very motivated to learn.

The final school on our visit was the Kipp Infinity School. This school was part of a Federation (just like the Harris Academies) spread across different parts of the United States. This school was focused on ensuring students were preparing themselves as soon as possible for University, by establishing a very motivating and stimulating environment. Literacy and Numeracy are given a high profile, in order to allow students to excel across all subjects. Again, displaying students work and achievement was very noticeable, which seemed to have a very positive impact on students as they strived to have their work and positive grades on display for themselves and others to see.

Finally, the Harris Federation Student Commission on Learning presented what it felt should be in place for a 'perfect Academy'. Students based their recommendations on observations throughout the week coupled with their experience working with the Commission over the past 12 months. The presentation went very well with the representatives from the New York City Department of Education complimenting the students on their thoughtful and evaluative comments.

A big thank you must be given to our sponsor, Lord Harris of Peckham and to the British Council for enabling Chloe and Paul to participate in such an amazing and fulfilling opportunity. We gained a great amount of knowledge that could definitely be used to improve learning across Harris Academies. Watch this space!!

Mr K O'Brien – Teacher of PE



Student Commission Enquiry Project at Harris Academy Falconwood



At Harris Academy Falconwood, students who are members of the Harris Federation Students Commission on Learning have been working on a research project – Teachers meeting all learners' needs through enterprising lessons.

The focus of the project is taken from ideas agreed by the Commission during the first year of its work. Each of the Harris Academies is working on some of the ideas conceived by the Commission. The ideas selected by the Falconwood commissioners were:

Idea 3	'Learners take on a role that involves responsibility for the learning and success of others'
Idea 6	'Teachers are orchestrators of variety in learning'
Idea 7	'Teachers demonstrate that they are learners too'

Our project is based on the hypothesis that, 'when students take on the role of observers, and teachers are open to learning from students' feedback, enterprising lessons can then be created'.

What will be the likely impact and how will we know it has been achieved?

- **Changes in teacher planning and practice will create more varied lessons**
- **Students will creatively work with teachers to develop differentiation resources**
- **Differentiated resources and teaching methods will have an impact on learning**

Who will be involved? When and where will it happen?

Existing Student Commissioners and selected assistants will be running the project with help from Mr Faith, who will be a consultant on effective research methods. Mr O'Brien, Miss Lotz and Mrs Divakaran will assist in the effective running of the project.

We will focus on lessons within each faculty that commissioners are a part of, with 3 teachers in each faculty. There will be 3 – 4 cycles of observations and feedback. Initially, commissioners will look for occurrences of differentiation and enterprise and the effects on learning within lessons and interview teachers and students. Students will then meet with teachers to discuss their initial findings. Commissioners and teachers will then co-design lessons, focusing on differentiation and enterprise. The effects on learning will then be observed and documented, using questionnaires, interviews and discussions with both teachers and students.

The students involved in the project are from across the four faculties and from our Post 16, including:

Chloe Golding, Kieran Simpson, Scott Perrott, Jasdev Bassan, Rori Hammil, Jack Hards, Mia Butler, Prabjoht Bassan, Hannah Spooner, Nick Martin, Sharon Uwaibi, Jessie Gallagher, Gemma Donovan, Amy Selise, Dean Gould, Sam Woods, Alex Smith, Jason Ofosu Yeboah and Paul Murphy.

Mrs U Divakaran – Assistant Principal

Year 9 – Options Process

The Year 9 options process takes place in second half of the Spring Term every year. In 2010 the curriculum choices for students going into Year 10 offered a wide range of courses and subjects intended to engage and excite our students at this crucial point in their time at the Academy. From BTEC courses in Business Studies and Outdoor Adventure to GCSEs in French and Film Studies, the Key Stage 4 curriculum has something to ensure every student will fulfil his or her potential and achieve great things by the end of Year 11!

All our current Year 9 students were provided with a detailed booklet of

information about all the courses on offer during a special assembly. Then, the Year 9 options evening was held here at the Academy on Thursday 18th March between 7pm and 8pm. Thank you to all the parents of our Year 9 students who came along to the evening to hear about the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 and to talk to the Subject Coordinators from each subject area in order to find out more about the individual courses being offered. We hope that this information and the opportunity to find out more about the courses on offer, have helped our Year 9 students to make the right decisions about what subjects to study at Key Stage 4.

Next year we are hoping to offer our options process on-line through the Harris Falconwood website so parents and students can access detailed information about compulsory subjects such as English and Maths as well as options subjects such as Hospitality, History, Sociology and Photography. This is something that is being trialled in other Academies across the Harris Federation and we are very excited about the possibility of doing it next year.

Watch this space!

Mr L Faith – Assistant Principal

Aim-Higher Road Show



The "Aim-Higher Road Show" rolled into town on 11th February. This initiative is designed to inspire more young people to go on to study at university once their school-days are over. Students from Years 9, 10, 11 and 12 were invited to climb aboard the Aim-Higher Road Show bus, in order to find out more about what is on offer at university.

Students worked in teams to explore various aspects of university life. A university graduate was on hand to talk to students about courses, grants, tuition fees and student loans. Our students were also able to ask questions about student life and about the GCSE and Post 16 qualifications needed to progress on to different university degree courses.

Other exciting Aim-Higher projects coming soon will include:

- **Year 9 and Year 12 students will have the opportunity to attend workshops about university study**
- **Year 12 students will be visiting university open days to learn about UCAS applications and student life on campus**
- **Year 10 students involved in the Aspire mentoring programme will be working with undergraduates from Greenwich University**
- **There will be summer school offers for Year 10 and Year 11 students**

Mrs U Divakaran – Assistant Principal

Harris Academy Falconwood New-Look Website

March 2010 saw the launch of the new Harris Academy Falconwood website which has been redesigned and rebranded in collaboration with London-based brand development and marketing for education specialists, Cleverbox.



You can find our website at:

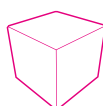
www.harrisfalconwood.org.uk

The website has been re-launched with a vibrant new look, new content, significant layout updates and provides a better interactive student, parent and staff, user experience.

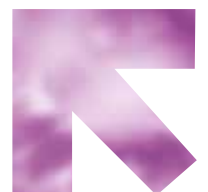
The new site management interface allows the Academy to have greater flexibility and control over design, layout and content. This will be especially useful when uploading student-produced or focused media and providing current or future information about the Academy community to users in a more dynamic way.

With students, parents and staff increasingly utilizing the website for innovative learning support, such as the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), it was felt that a fresh look for the website would be beneficial to all our online visitors.

Mr N Metcalfe – Assistant Principal



cleverbox



New and Modern Temporary Buildings



With the construction of the new Academy building now underway, we were able to move into the final phase of the temporary buildings that have been constructed on the site of some ancient and redundant huts which dated back to the 1940s. These damp and dingy old buildings have been replaced with a large and modern block, which while only intended to be used for under two years, provides our students and staff with accommodation which is superior to most of the existing Academy buildings.



The arrival of the temporary building was a site to behold as each unit was craned from the back of a huge lorry and positioned like a giant's Lego set. The real transformation then took place as an army of carpenters, plumbers, electricians and decorators moved in, turning dozens of these containers into corridors, classrooms and even the new dining hall.

Each classroom is warm and light, carpeted, freshly decorated and equipped with new furniture that has been chosen and purchased to go into the new Academy building when it opens for business in September 2011. The furnishings include new desks and chairs for students, as well as an Interactive Whiteboard in each room. The temporary building now houses the whole Maths department as well as providing extra classrooms for English, Humanities and PE

lessons. As well as these extra classrooms the building has also provided us with:

Art Rooms – our Art and Design teachers now have specialist furniture for the first time, consisting of high level benches and comfortable stools for all students creating a suitable environment for a range of creative work in art lessons.

Fitness Suite – this large space occupies most of the ground floor of one wing of the new block. The room is carpeted and has a large mirror for dance and aerobic classes. A set of rowing machines can be moved out into the main space which is big enough for a whole group to take part in activities such as step classes.

Computer Room – this additional computer room allows teachers from all subjects to book a state-of-the-art ICT suite which can accommodate a whole class with a computer for each student – a real help for our Year 11 students to finish and improve coursework as well as for the younger students to use.

Dining Hall – this is the last part of the block to come into use now that our colleagues from Wilson Jones have moved from the old dining hall into their new kitchen and are now able to deliver their normal high quality

of service at breakfast and morning break, as well as at lunchtime. The new dining hall is larger than its predecessor and allows around 200 students to sit and eat, having chosen from a selection of hot main meals, pasta and cold snacks and sandwiches available from the two serveries inside the dining hall.

Outside the new block, the surrounding paths have been remodelled, allowing students access to a small playground area to replace the main playground which has now become part of the site for the new Academy building itself.

Students have got used to a new one-way system in the new block which helps to provide safe and smooth movement between lessons. The new block also offers full disabled access via a ramp and lift to the first floor.

Mr E Evans – Vice Principal



Knife Crime Workshop

During the Autumn Term, all of our Year 10 students took part in a Knife Crime workshop led by the Metropolitan Police and friends of Rob Knox, who was tragically killed in a knife crime incident. Rob was a popular young man who went to school in Bexley. Students heard first-hand from his friends about the dangers of carrying knives and of gang crime.

Throughout the workshop, students were able to share their opinions and concerns about young people who are involved in knife crime. By the end of the workshop some excellent ideas and strategies to help young people avoid getting involved in knife crime had been established.

As an Academy, we are very encouraged by the level of maturity and responsibility our students showed over this issue and hope that their ideas can help others in the community.

All Harris students are aware that the Academy and Federation have a zero-tolerance policy towards knives or any other weapons being brought onto any of the Academy sites.

Mr L Faith – Assistant Principal

Business Studies Trip to The Bank Of England and Bloomberg

Teachers from the Business and Information and Communication Technology (BICT) subject area took 13 Post 16 students on a City Walk trip to the City of London on 3rd February to visit the Bank of England Museum and Bloomberg. Students had the opportunity to see the 'Wheeling and Dealing' of finance and commodities broking at work in Bloomberg and to experience what holding a bar of gold bullion worth £280,000 in one's hand felt like at the Bank of England Museum. Our students were even able to crack a safe – a new skill for them we hope!

Most of our students now want to go to university after seeing the diverse staff at Bloomberg (mostly age 20–30 years old). Bloomberg provided an inspirational insight into the financial world, in an office environment showing a positive and caring attitude towards employees, within a productive and relaxed set up. It was a very nice experience for our students in terms of raising aspirations and expectations.

Our students were absolutely fabulous and were a credit to the Academy with their excellent behaviour and the level of intelligence demonstrated during presentations at both the Bank of England and Bloomberg.

Mrs O Okuwa – Coordinator of BICT

Healthy Schools

Congratulations to all the students and staff at Harris Academy Falconwood! We have now been awarded our Healthy School status for 2009/2010. We are very pleased to receive this award and we are now looking to build on this award and to make our Academy as healthy as possible.

We are encouraging all students to take part in a healthy lifestyles challenge this term. Each tutor group decided on their own team challenge which is to be followed by all members of their tutor group.

Examples of challenges:

- **Eat five pieces of fruit or veg per day**
- **Bring a bottle of water to the Academy every day**
- **Do five minutes of exercise every day during pm registration**
- **Exercise 3 times a week for at least 20 minutes**
- **Limit cakes to 3 times a week**
- **Attend one sports enrichment every week**

I look forward to reporting back on the progress that we have made in the next edition of Insight.

Miss L Clifford – Assistant Principal





Rugby

The Academy Rugby club has now been in full swing since October half term and has already been incredibly successful. We now have an enrichment register which boasts over 50 students. This success has been accompanied by an astounding uptake for the England rugby workshops on Monday 2nd of February which attracted more than 70 boys and girls from across the year groups.

The Rugby workshops delivered by England rugby star Danielle Waterman were well received by the students who were a credit to the Academy, so much so that Danielle specifically commented on the massive improvements she noticed around the Academy and amongst the students compared to only a year ago. The Academy teams awaiting their first fixtures are the under-14 squad (Years 8 and 9 combined) and under-16 squad (Years 10 and 11 combined) who aim to follow in the footsteps of their under-12 (Year 7) counterparts who began their season's campaign with an outstanding 64-0 away win over a more experienced St Thomas Moore side.

The under-12's result is testament to the hard work and commitment the Year 7 boys have shown over the last term and let's hope for the same level of achievement from the rest of the club!!

Mr D Hughes – Teacher of PE

Football News

Year 10s Reach Semi-Finals

The Year 10 football team made quite a remarkable achievement by progressing to the semi-finals of the Kent Cup this season. Out of the 76 schools that entered the competition, Harris Academy Falconwood ended as one of the last four teams in the competition, battling for a place in the final. Unfortunately, we lost the semi-final in a close game to the Towers, a school in Ashford with a considerably larger intake of students.

"The whole team played to the best of their abilities showing great spirit, energy and love for the game. We played very well throughout the whole tournament. Everyone was disappointed that we lost in the semi-final but we hope to do as well next year and possibly get to the final" – Team Captain Charlie Ward, 10AA

Mr K Watson – Coordinator of PE

Post 16 Charity Football Match

The Harris Academy Falconwood Post 16 students organised a charity football match to raise money for the survivors of the recent earthquake in Haiti. The match was arranged by Gemma Donovan, Ellis Parsons, Samson Faludon and Emmanuel Amuno. Gemma and Ellis also negotiated a deal with a local shop to provide refreshments. Post 16 students were supported by Year 10 and Year 11 students; Dean Gould, Josh Savage, Favour Amuno and Jason Ofosu-Yeboah. Teachers who played include Mr Watson, Miss Rose, Mr Akiti, Mr Wade, Miss White, Mr Gardiner, Mr Piper-Masha, Mr Colley, Mr Hughes, Mr McDonough and Ms Almond. The score at the end of 60 minutes of play was at 3-3, taking the two teams into a nail biting penalty shoot-out which eventually finished at 7-7, at which point both teams chose to shake hands and to declare the contest an honourable draw.

A total of £65 was raised for the Disasters Emergency Committee who are organising the UK's charitable support for the beleaguered population of Haiti. A big thank you to all the teachers who helped supervise this match including Mrs Divakaran, Mr Price Whittle, Mrs Okuwa, Ms Lotz, Mrs Clifford, Mr Jenner, Mr Evans and Ms Askew.

This event was great fun to organise and tested a number of our enterprising skills including team work, communication and, of course, positive thinking. There are more charity events coming soon.

Gemma Donovan and Ellis Parsons – Post 16 Students

