

# IMPROVING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS IN JUST FOUR MONTHS



The Gloucester Academy, which opened in September 2010, took over from two undersubscribed secondary schools in Gloucester which had been categorised as ‘causing concern’.

The vision for the new academy was driven by the imperative to deliver a high quality learning experience through an engaging, stimulating curriculum, a wide range of academic and vocational pathways, and an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

The academy now accommodates 1,050 students aged 11-16 and 200 students post-16. It collaborates with other age 14-19 education institutions to provide a wide range of academic and vocational options.

EC Harris was appointed by the Department of Education (DfE) as the overall project manager for the Gloucester Academy in May 2010. The project team was able to draw from the wide range of technical expertise within EC Harris, including: stakeholder engagement management, legal and governance, uniform procurement, education advisor role and ICT.

## Creating solutions

The key challenge for this project was to deliver the academy in a considerably tight timescale, less than four months, allowing it to open on the 1st September 2010, ready for the coming academic year.

Given the short timescale it was essential everyone had a clear view of the planned progress for the project. EC Harris developed a project timeline structure to manage the deliverables. This involved:

- Setting individuals and key stakeholders specific tasks and actions
- Increasing the frequency of meetings and workshops to ensure the project team were focused
- Utilising EC Harris’ skills and expertise wherever possible to help deliver the project on time, for example when procuring the academy uniforms the firm were able to save the client valuable time through the use of EC Harris’ extensive supply chain.

*“The academy was delivered within an accelerated timeframe of less than four months - the quickest set-up to date for this type of academy.”*

**EC HARRIS**  
**BUILT ASSET**  
**CONSULTANCY**

*“The EC Harris team leveraged its managed community and supply-chain to add value whenever possible - speeding up the whole process.”*

Of the two predecessors; one was a multi-faith, single-sex, Voluntary Aided School and the other, a mixed-sex, Catholic school. It was a challenge to combine these two very different schools, to aid the process, joint planning meetings between both student councils were held and the new first year students were all located on one site.

The BSF programme stopped in the middle of the delivery of the project, which caused uncertainty with sponsorship. EC Harris worked closely with the DfE to secure academy funding for the opening academic year.

### Adding value

Through EC Harris' effective project management, utilisation of sector expertise and knowledge, the academy was delivered within an accelerated timeframe of less than four months. The quickest set-up to date of this type of academy.

EC Harris was able to help with staffing issues by procuring the lawyers responsible for staff transfer and ensuring the Funding and Development Agreements were in place. The firm also co-ordinated the search for Head of Academy and Interim Finance Director positions.

The new academy now provides significant benefits to the local community as a result of the changes to the educational vision and new governance established in the academy trust.

### Contact

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