

THE RIDING A DREAM ACADEMY

Year 2 Review
(August 2022 - July 2023)





INTRODUCTION

Following on from a successful pilot year, we are delighted to provide you with an update on our first full year operating as the Riding A Dream Academy. Thanks to the enduring support of our funders, The Racing Foundation, year on year we have seen a massive 281% increase in the number of young people we have worked with – 66% more than we had projected in our original plan. We remain at the very forefront of diversity and inclusion initiatives in British racing, with 71% of our students across all our programmes coming from diverse ethnic audiences. And we've broadened our output too, which has seen us work with young people with no previous experience of racing or riding and identify untapped talent through a programme of Taster Days.

We believe that such work has never been more important. At a time when the sport is struggling for relevance and attendances have been falling, the Riding A Dream Academy has demonstrated a unique ability within the racing industry, to engage with and attract talent from diverse ethnic communities. Being able to reach these audiences and appeal to the full spectrum of the British public, in terms of interest in careers and leisure pursuits, is essential for the long-term future of the sport.

We are already seeing the impact of our work with several of the young people we have supported making their way in the industry. To date, eight young people have graduated from the Academy onto the Foundation Course at the British Racing School, five of whom are now already working in racing yards. In all 64% of Scholarship students have so far taken another step within the sport, be it the Foundation Course or work experience at places such as Rossdales, the Newmarket Equine Hospital and Newmarket Pony Academy.

We are grateful to all of the individuals and organisations who have got us here. From the Racing Foundation who have supported us from the start, to our incredible delivery partners, the British Racing School. We extend our thanks also to Champion Equestrian who kindly supply all our kit, to The Jockey Club who hosted some of our students this year as well as all the racing businesses and venues that allow us to bring students on trips.

As we head into our third year, we are even more determined to help change the sport for the better, support an ever-increasing group of young people from under-served communities to access life-changing opportunities and demonstrate that racing truly is a sport for all, regardless of your background or ethnicity.

NAOMI LAWSON, DIRECTOR

OUR OBJECTIVES

The Academy's objectives are to:

- Create a lasting legacy from Khadijah Mellah's inspirational achievements and the Riding A Dream film, that allows other young people from diverse, underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds to get involved in racing and support wider diversity, participation and inclusion within the sport.
- Nurture and identify diverse talent and provide opportunities for personal growth and development for young people from these groups within the racing industry.
- Develop new pathways into the sport which dovetail with existing initiatives and support participants to go onto pursue a career in racing.
- Improve diversity and inclusion through these innovative grassroots initiatives, make racing more relevant to non-traditional audiences and demonstrate how the sport is a force for good, helping to improve racing's reputation in wider society.



OUR STUDENTS

Across all of our programmes 71% of our students come from a diverse ethnic background. This is unmatched across the racing industry and far exceeds the 2-3% of jockeys who come from these communities, and the 3-5% of students currently going onto the industry's Foundation Courses.

We work with urban equestrian centres such as Ebony Horse Club, Urban Equestrian Academy and Park Lane Stables to identify 13-16 year olds to apply for our courses. This year we have also developed a partnership with the Harris Federation of schools in London which comprises 50 schools and over 40,000 students and work with charities such as XLP, KickOff@3 and Muslimah Sports Association.

On average, we have received four times as many applications as there have been available places.

71%

OF OUR
STUDENTS
COME FROM
A DIVERSE
ETHNIC
BACKGROUND

64%

OF
SCHOLARSHIP
STUDENTS HAVE
EITHER
JOINED THE
FOUNDATION
COURSE OR
COMPLETED WORK
EXPERIENCE IN
THE INDUSTRY

+281%

INCREASE IN
THE NUMBER
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WORKED WITH
THIS YEAR

ON
AVERAGE **4X** AS MANY
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AS AVAILABLE
PLACES ON
OUR COURSES



OUR PROGRAMMES

All of the Academy's programmes are run in conjunction with our delivery partners, the British Racing School (BRS) and are designed to develop students' riding ability and knowledge of the sport, positioning it as an exciting and rewarding career to pursue. We run four programmes for young people aged 13-16 from diverse communities and underprivileged backgrounds. These are:

1) THE KHADIJAH MELLAH SCHOLARSHIP

This is our flagship programme and runs over the course of a year, starting with a five day residential at the British Racing School and followed by 11 monthly weekend sessions (Friday – Sunday) at the BRS. Our second year cohort of students graduated on 15th July.

[Watch their Graduation video here](#)

- 88% of this year's Scholarship students were from a diverse ethnic background (vs 77% in the pilot year)
 - Three students were from Ebony Horse Club
 - Two from Urban Equestrian Academy, Leicester
 - Two from Summerfield Stables, Birmingham
 - One via a Pony Racing Academy
- 50% of this year's Scholarship students have either joined the Foundation Course or are set to join it.
 - One young person graduated from the Scholarship early to join the Foundation Course and is now a popular and valued member of the team at Gary Moore's stables.
 - A further two students have joined the Foundation Course this Summer, in addition to a third student who is joining from the Pilot Year Scholarship.
 - One young person is taking part in work experience at Donald McCain's yard ahead of joining the Foundation Course when they are old enough in 2024.



[Watch Hezekiah's story here](#)



Just wanted to say thank you so much to the whole team for looking after [our students] and helping them so much over the past year. A particular thank you for putting your heart and soul into the Academy. Your work is appreciated and much needed in the equine industry. I hope to see it develop further.



- 100% of the students agreed that their riding had improved over the course of the scholarship.
- 86% of the students agreed that they had become resilient and knew that they could achieve difficult things.
- 100% of students said that the Scholarship had positively impacted their knowledge of careers in racing; knowledge of British horse racing and a number of technical skills.
- 64% of Scholarship students across the pilot and Year 2 have either gone onto complete the Foundation Course or participated in work experience (Rossdale's; Newmarket Equine Hospital; Newmarket Pony Academy and Donald McCain's yard).

Director, Urban Equestrian Centre

THE RESIDENTIAL WEEKS

These are fun, riding-based introductions to racing and racehorses, held at the British Racing School. The weeks cater for both those with existing experience of riding via an Urban Equestrian Centre and those who are complete beginners. Students take part in horse care, riding, equiciser and fitness sessions and go on trips to the races, gallops, training yards and vets etc. We ran three Residential Weeks in 2022-23. In 2023-24 the Residential Weeks will be kindly funded by the Sir Peter O'Sullivan Charitable Trust.

- A total of 22 students attended a Residential Week in Year 2, of whom 70% were from a diverse ethnic background.
- Five students (23%) who attended a Year 2 Residential Week were subsequently selected for a Scholarship programme.
 - Two completed the Year 2 Scholarship and the remaining three joined the Year 3 Scholarship in August 2023
- 95% of students across all weeks said they were interested in finding out more about at least one aspect to do with horse racing (such as pony racing, going to the races and the Foundation Course etc)
- Across both the pilot and year 2, 11 Residential students have gone onto / been offered places on a Scholarship.
- Two students who originally started out on a Residential Course have gone onto complete the Foundation Course and are now working in industry (one of these via the Scholarship programme)
- Two students have taken part in work experience at a racing yard (Charlie Poste and Michael Attwater).
- 76% of students across all weeks rated their confidence working with racehorses as 7/10 or higher, by the end of the week
- 95% of students said they were interested in finding out more about at least one aspect to do with horse racing (such as pony racing, going to the races, the Foundation course etc).



I think my daughter has been given a great taster of what to expect from racing. She has seen what it takes and how much dedication it takes to work in this field. She has been so impressed by it that she is considering looking at what opportunities there are with the National Stud.



Residential Parent



It was a great week, I've enjoyed learning new skills. I still can't believe I done a center it was for a small bit but it was still good. I enjoyed the people.

Residential Student



THE REGIONAL WEEKS

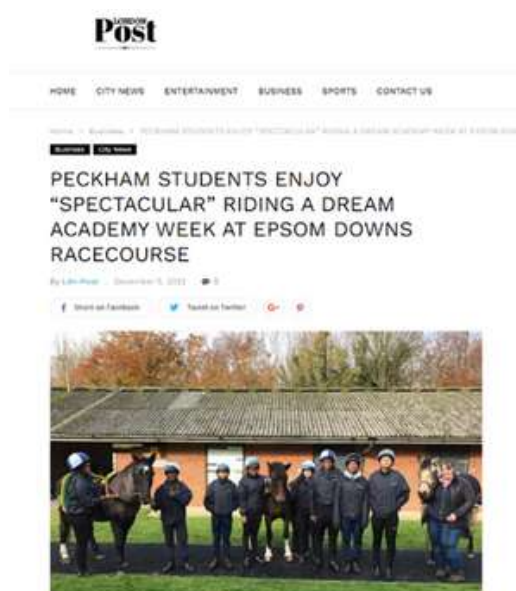
We ran two regional weeks in Year 2 where we took the Academy out to communities in order to make it as accessible as possible.

The first took place over five days at Epsom Downs Racecourse at the end of November 2022 with 10 students from Harris Academy Peckham, from South East London where a high percentage of the school's students are on free school meals / pupil premium. Students had the chance to ride for the first time; learn to look after horses and ponies; visit Pat Phelan's yard; take part in media training with Oli Bell and enjoy the kind hospitality of Epsom Downs Racecourse and the Jockey Club.

We held a second Regional Week at Solihull Riding Club in July 2023 with 14 students from Summerfield Stables who each had some riding experience. They learned to ride in jockey pose; took part in simulator sessions; enjoyed a fitness session with Head of Jockey Coaching, George Baker, learned more about horse welfare from members of the Horse Welfare Team and enhanced their stable and horse handling skills.

- 100% of students from Harris Academy Peckham were from a diverse ethnic community and a number were on pupil premium
- 48% of students from Summerfield stables were from a diverse ethnic background.
- 100% of Peckham students agreed or strongly agreed that the week had helped them to feel more confident and happier.
- 100% of Peckham students agreed or strongly agreed that the week had helped them to feel happier.
- 100% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they were proud of everything they had achieved during the week.
- 93% of Summerfield students said they were interested in finding out more about at least one aspect to do with horse racing (such as pony racing, going to the races and the Foundation Course etc).
- 71% of Summerfield students were interested in work experience in the racing industry.

[Watch a video of the Peckham students at Epsom Downs here](#)



THE TASTER DAYS

In 2023 50 students from five Harris Federation Schools took part in Taster Days at the British Racing School. The schools were from some of the most deprived wards in England where a high percentage of their students are on free school meals / pupil premium. The schools we worked with were as follows:

- Harris Academy Peckham
- Harris Boys' Academy East Dulwich
- Harris Academy Bermondsey
- Harris Academy Beckenham
- Harris Academy Battersea

Ten students attended each day where they rode for the first time; took part in a horse handling session; tried out their jockey pose on an equiciser; toured the British Racing School and found out more about the courses and careers for them within the sport.

- 71% of students came from a diverse ethnic background
- 94% of students expressed an interest in finding out more about racing and taking part in other racing-related trips and experience

The Taster Days allow us to interact with a large group of young people; provide them with a positive introduction to the sport; position racing as potential career; and talent spot for the wider Academy programmes.

As a result of the Taster Days we received 11 applications for wider Academy courses from Harris Federation students (both those who attended a Taster day and from the wider school community) who would never otherwise have applied, demonstrating the Academy's ability to engage and inspire new audiences.

Three Harris Federation students subsequently attended a Residential Course and one of these has taken up a place on the 2023-24 Khadijah Mellah Scholarship.

With a conversion rate of 22% the Taster Days allow us to reach young people with hitherto untapped talent and no previous experience of racing or riding, thereby ensuring that the Academy's programmes are available to as many young people as possible, not just those with riding experience.



YEAR 3 PLANS

Our aspirations in 2023-24 (Year 3) are to support even more young people from diverse communities and disadvantaged backgrounds to get into the sport and to drive for greater diversity, inclusion and equity within the wider sport of horse racing. Our priorities are to:

1. Increase the numbers of young people that we work with. We will do this primarily by increasing the number of Taster Days that we offer throughout the year, with a view to also holding them regionally
2. Spot talent earlier by focusing on 13-16 year olds and supporting them through the Academy Pathway (see page 10)
3. Refine the Academy Pathway
4. Bring in greater resource to support the Academy's growth
5. Develop our Jockey Talent Pathway with the Jockey Coaching Team
6. Formalise the Academy's legal status

GET INVOLVED!

We are always looking for individuals and organisations to support our work and would love to hear from anyone who would like to get involved and help make our sport more diverse and inclusive. In particular, we would love to hear from any organisations which would like to support our Taster Day programme, including being able to help host these regionally. We would also love to hear from organisations that would be able to sponsor some of our students as part of their own D&I commitments.

Please get in contact with Naomi Lawson, Director and Co-Founder of the Academy to discuss:

Naomi@RidingADreamAcademy.com
07795 221320



THE RIDING A DREAM ACADEMY PATHWAY

The following Riding A Dream Academy Pathway details how the programmes link together, becoming increasingly intensive and leading students to the Foundation Course and a career in racing.

Increasing intensity of involvement in the Academy and Racing

Activity	Target group 13-16 with no riding experience	Target 13-16 age group with riding experience via an urban equestrian centre	Notes
Engagement with urban equestrian centres (UECs)		✓	Regular visits to UECs throughout the year to identify talent and promote racing to young people
Taster days at the British Racing School	✓	✓	Focused on those aged 13-14 (Year 9) as an introduction to racing
Keeping in touch days	✓	✓	Where there is not a residential week course immediately available to apply for, hold quarterly keeping in touch days to maintain students' interest
Regional Weeks	✓	✓	Run with UECs to allow as many of their students as possible to attend
Residential Weeks	✓	✓	Focused on those aged 14-15 (Year 10) and catering for both riders and beginners
Khadijah Mellah Scholarship	✓	✓	Our most prestigious programme, running over a year and focussed on those aged 15-16 with the most talent and potential
Work Experience	✓	✓	Arranged where possible for interested students
Foundation Course	✓	✓	All Academy students signposted to the Foundation Course and careers in racing
Jockey Talent Pathway	✓	✓	Supporting the most talented riders from diverse and non-traditional racing backgrounds into the jockey ranks