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SPORT

■ David Cannon
(head of
education and
recruitment)



Academy is proving a big success at AFC

FOOTBALL

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These are exciting times for AFC Sudbury.

In September, one month after installing an artificial 3G pitch, the club launched the AFC Sudbury Academy – where students can gain an education and improve their footballing skills.

The academy currently has more than 25 students (aged 16-19) on its books, all of whom, compete for the Yellows in the Thurlow Nunn First Division, as well as the club's Under-18 team.

With BTEC and NVQ qualifications available, David Cannon, head of education and recruitment at the Academy, is very excited about the new set-up – now and in the future.

"It's fantastic," said Cannon.

"We've got one lad here who said to his father recently that he's having the time of his life.

"He's really enjoying the education and he's really enjoying the football.

"We've made the education and football the same thing, with the education built around becoming a better footballer."

The academy building sits just outside the main stadium at AFC Sudbury on Brundon Lane, with Cannon delighted at how things have been going so far.

"Up until this point, we have been saying that there's going to be a 3G pitch here, there's going to be an academy here," he continued.

"All these things are here now, we're up and running, and it's continuing to grow.

"They (the students) have got their



own building, laptops, kitchen, lockers, pool table, table tennis facilities, and an X-box.

"There's everything here for the lads, they walk out and they've got a wonderful surface with high quality coaching. You won't go far wrong being coached by Danny Laws on a daily basis."

Cannon, who delivers the coaching and teaching alongside Laws and Craig Power (another UEFA B coach), believes a 'typical day' at the academy is of interest to a 'typical teenager'.

"We start at 11am because teenagers function better by this time," explained Cannon, who is Laws' right-hand man when Sudbury play

their Thurlow Nunn games on a Saturday afternoon.

"They will do two hours of their education – talking psychology, tactics, and technical bits before they then have their lunch.

"They then have what we call 'structured free time' and that's for them to enhance what they want to be – whether that's to improve their core strength, use our gym, improve their ball mastery or have a one-on-one mentor meeting.

"We then finish off with a two-hour coaching session, working to a theme that starts at an individual level and culminates at the end of the week in a full 11v11 environment."

Cannon believes that the pathway

the academy is creating will not only turn out more talented footballers in the region, but footballers with realistic employment and further education opportunities as well.

"Daniel Bloomfield (player/coach at AFC Sudbury) holds several Premier Sport franchises in the area, and for the appropriate student, there are opportunities to gain employment coaching in schools," said Cannon.

"We will be touring the USA in 2016, to enable the lads to explore US scholarships. Post-19 destinations are at the forefront in all that we do."

Operating between Monday and Thursday – 11am until 6pm – the academy's partner school for schol-

ars is Ormiston Sixth Form.

Indeed, scholars who wish to enter the football scheme, but do their education at Ormiston can do so.

"Ben Judge is the perfect example," continued Cannon. "He's studying A-levels in Maths, Further Maths, Biology and Business Studies (at Ormiston), but is doing his football with us.

"Other football clubs' schemes couldn't accommodate that lad, we are building something unique and special here."

■ All enquiries surrounding the AFC Sudbury Academy are advised to contact Cannon on dmcannon78@gmail.com or on 0781 5852794.



■ Top, some of the boys in studies. Middle, Mike Ford (head of academy rehabilitation). Above, David Cannon (head of education and recruitment) taking a training session. Left, the current crop at Sudbury

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