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Mr D Willis  
Haberdashers' Aske's Crayford Academy  
Iron Mill Lane  
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Dear Mr Willis

## **Academies initiative: monitoring inspection of Haberdashers' Aske's Crayford Academy**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Chris Wood HMI to your academy on 15 and 16 February 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a first monitoring inspection in connection with the academies initiative.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal and other senior and middle leaders, a group of pupils and the Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer from the Haberdashers' Aske's Federation.

### **Context**

This all-through academy opened in September 2009 with pupils in all year groups up to Year 6. In September 2010 the first cohort of 180 Year 7 pupils were admitted. The academy will expand year on year and will in time admit pupils from the Early Years Foundation Stage up to sixth form. A small group of sixth formers, studying engineering, will start at the academy in the next academic year. The academy is one of three in the Haberdashers' Aske's Federation. The three academies share one governing body.

The academy is heavily over-subscribed and mobility is low. About three quarters of the pupils are of White British heritage. Black African pupils and those of Gypsy/Roma heritage form the next largest groups. There is also a small number of looked after children. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and the proportion who have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities are much higher than average. The academy has resourced provision for eight pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder. There is also a Sure Start children's centre on site. The academy has a specialism in technology.

Building works are well underway. The new building, which will accommodate the secondary-aged pupils, is scheduled to open in September of this year. Currently, the Year 7 pupils are taught in the 'hub'; this high quality temporary accommodation provides a good base for this year group.

### **Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning**

There is a mixed picture of attainment across the academy. At the end of the last academic year, the youngest pupils' attainment was above local averages, indicating a good level of development in most areas of learning. In contrast, attainment at the end of Year 2 was very low in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected Level 4 was broadly in line with the national figure in both English and mathematics. However, the proportion reaching higher levels was much lower than that found nationally. Almost half of the pupils in this year group had special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their attainment was above that of pupils with similar needs nationally.

The pupils' progress is carefully tracked. The information shows that the majority of pupils in all year groups made good progress over the course of the academy's first year. From their starting points in Year 3, pupils in Year 6 made progress at a rate that was significantly faster than expected. Much of this is accounted for by the good and often excellent gains they made last year. Their progress was boosted by good teaching, a good range of additional support and carefully targeted interventions, backed up by higher expectations of their capabilities. The gap between their attainment and the national figure closed considerably. Pupils eligible for free school meals and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made the most progress, and no group of pupils underachieved. Although pupils in Year 2 caught up a good deal last year, they still have some way to go before their attainment is in line with expectations for their age. The academy is taking steps to make sure that this happens, and is providing a good deal of support for these pupils who are currently in Year 3.

Pupils in Year 7 have got off to a good start. The majority have moved on quickly in English and mathematics; 70% have already made the progress expected in a year in mathematics and the figure in English is not far behind. Their target grades at GCSE have already been set and the pupils are plotting their progress towards them.

## **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Pupils said that they enjoy their lessons and this showed in their high levels of motivation and enthusiasm. Pupils are keen to learn and they collaborate very well with one another. They usually listen well and are responsive to their teachers. These positive attributes make a strong contribution to their learning. In lessons and around the academy pupils are well behaved, polite and welcoming. They said that they value the opportunities that are provided for different year groups to work together and support one another and appreciate how everyone gets along well together. 'This is a happy, friendly school', said one.

Attendance levels are rising and are close to the academy's target of 95%. During this inspection very few pupils were absent in Year 7, reflecting their enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning.

## **The effectiveness of provision**

Sixteen parts of lessons were observed during this inspection. Inspectors' judgements accorded with the outcomes of checks on teaching made by senior leaders and confirm that there is a substantial proportion of teaching that is good or better. Teaching is more securely good at Key Stage 3 and in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Teachers have good relationships with pupils and set a positive climate for learning in lessons. Questions are usually used well to probe pupils' understanding and to encourage them to explain their reasoning; in a science lesson pupils were given time to think and express their ideas at some length, while other pupils listened attentively. Time is used well and there is a good pace in many lessons. Pupils made excellent progress in a design and technology lesson where work was challenging; the teacher's explanations were clear and questioning stretched their thinking. Occasionally, however, in both primary and secondary classes there is an over-reliance on 'hands up' responses to questions. This means that although many pupils want to contribute, not all are able to do so. There is scope to extend teachers' questioning techniques and the way responses are managed to ensure more pupils are involved.

Pupils are encouraged to evaluate for themselves what they have learned in lessons and the recently introduced 'learning passports' help keep younger pupils focused on the targets they are aiming for. However, some of the targets are not expressed in language that the pupils readily understand and are sometimes not specific enough to guide the pupil toward the intended outcome. For example, 'to improve my fluency in reading' does not help the pupil understand what to do in order to achieve this.

The Nursery and Reception classes offer a bright and stimulating environment which captures children's interests and enthusiasm. The teachers and assistants support children's learning well, working effectively with small groups on specific topics but balanced with offering children the scope to develop their independence and follow their own interests both indoors and out.

The attainment and progress of different groups of pupils, for example those of Gypsy Roma heritage, are carefully monitored. Teachers and senior leaders regularly discuss the progress of individuals and the factors, such as attendance or other additional needs, that might affect performance. Steps are then taken to help pupils overcome the barriers to their learning.

The academy has recently gained the Inclusion Mark for its work with pupils who have particular needs. Precisely targeted interventions, such as reading recovery and the good support provided by teaching assistants to small groups of pupils, enable those with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress. The academy has been successful in helping pupils who have particular difficulties in managing their behaviour to be re-integrated into lessons. Pupils said how much they appreciate the work of the learning mentors in supporting and guiding them should they have problems.

The technology specialism enhances and enriches the curriculum well. There is an extensive range of technology-related activities and events which inspire and enthuse the pupils. Technology is also firmly embedded in the day-to-day curriculum and some imaginative cross-curricular links have been made. For example, Year 5 pupils have researched the history of the local area and are now engaged in building a scale model of the first plane to cross the Atlantic, which was built at a factory in Crayford. The specialism also makes a particularly strong contribution to the pupils' personal development, fostering teamwork, leadership and skills of enquiry.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers**

The Principal and senior leaders give a strong steer to the academy's work. They have established a climate of high aspirations and the expectation of success. The pupils and staff are responding well to this and the impact shows in how much has been achieved in a short space of time. There is a good balance between warmth and support and striving for academic excellence which makes the academy a positive place in which to work and to learn. The leadership structure enables staff at different levels to contribute and to make a difference. Roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are clear. Subject leaders work very well together on cross-curricular projects and there is a strong focus on establishing common approaches. Teachers are reflective practitioners and they are given good support with their professional development. Cross-phase working is becoming well established. Leaders understand the need to maintain this emphasis in the coming years as the numbers

of secondary pupils and teachers increase and outnumber the primary phase considerably.

There is a clear vision for the work of all three academies in the federation, which underpins the work that has taken place so far and the plans for the future. The governing body provides strong support for the academy, rigorously holding leaders to account but also supporting and enabling change to happen. The considerable strengths in leadership and the evident improvements in pupils' outcomes show that the academy is well placed to continue to move forward.

### **External support**

The academy works well with other partners to improve provision and outcomes. Expertise is sought from within the federation and from other providers, such as a neighbouring local authority, where needed. The academy is also able to offer expertise of its own to the other federation academies. The School Improvement Partner contributes well to the processes of self-evaluation.

### **Main Judgement**

The academy has made good progress towards raising standards.

The academy's plans for improvement are suitable and no additional areas for development have been identified.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Group at the Department for Education. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**