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Dr Tesca Bennett
Haberdashers' Aske's Knights Academy
Launcelot Road
Bromley
BR1 5EB

Dear Dr Bennett

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Haberdashers' Aske's Knights Academy

Following my visit to your school on 7 November 2014 I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in November 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Education Funding Agency, the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Chief Executive Officer of the Haberdashers' Aske's Federation Trust Board and the Director of Children's Services for Lewisham.

Yours sincerely,

Lesley Cox
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2013.

Improve the quality of teaching by:

- developing the quality of pupils' writing and reading skills in the primary phase, particularly boys
- focussing on the quality of learning and degree of challenge for the most able pupils
- narrowing the achievement gaps in the secondary phase between pupil groups and their peers, particularly those eligible for the pupil premium, White British, and pupils who have special educational needs
- improving the consistency with which pupils are guided through teachers' marking and feedback
- raising students' achievement further in Year 12.

Improve pupils' behaviour and safety by:

- providing pupils with a better understanding of how their behaviour can impact on the safety and learning of others
- strengthening the way in which information is gathered and analysed about disruption in lessons, bullying and other forms of poor behaviour, including the use of internal and external exclusion
- reducing even further the incidence of lateness to school and persistent absenteeism.

Ensure governors work closely with senior and middle leaders at all levels to improve the standard of behaviour and safety in the academy by:

- having a detailed understanding of trends and patterns around incidents of poor behaviour so that they check that the actions being taken are making a difference
- making sure that staff consistently and rigorously apply the academy's behaviour policy
- ensuring that all staff have the skills in how to manage difficult behaviour especially that which prevents the learning of others.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 7 November 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the principal and senior leaders. A meeting took place with representatives of the task group, attended by the Chair of Governors, the Chief Executive Officer of the Federation Trust and the local authority improvement partner. Further meetings with a group of teachers, members of the parents' forum and secondary pupils from the focus group took place. Pupils were spoken to informally and their behaviour observed during break and lunch times. Tours of both primary and secondary sites were carried out to observe the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. Governing body minutes were reviewed. Logs and records of behaviour and attendance were evaluated. The academy's record of checks made on new staff was scrutinised.

Context

There have been further staffing changes since the last monitoring inspection. 27 members of staff left the academy at the end of the summer term. These included senior and middle leaders who held posts of responsibility. In September, 31 new staff joined the academy, including additional teachers to provide more single year classes within the primary academy and new leaders. A new vice-principal has been appointed and will join the academy in January 2015. The academy has reviewed how learning support assistants are deployed at the primary academy. A new pastoral management structure has been introduced at the secondary academy and heads of year for all year groups have now been appointed.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Leaders are regularly held to account by governors and the task group for achieving improvements identified within the action plan. Attainment across the academy has continued to rise although not all targets for 2014 were achieved. Most pupils at Key Stage 1 and 2 achieved standards in-line with or above national averages for reading, writing and mathematics. However, some more able pupils failed to achieve the higher levels. Leaders have responded by reducing class sizes and the number of pupils that are taught in mixed-age groups within the primary academy. This has allowed them to offer additional support to pupils so that performance gaps are closed as quickly as possible. While standards in English and mathematics have continued to improve across all key stages, pupils achieved less well in some foundation subjects at the end of Key Stage 4. Consequently, the number of pupils who achieved five A*-C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, fell slightly compared to 2013. In the sixth form, students achieved less well than predicted at both AS and A2 level. Leaders have therefore reviewed the sixth form curriculum offer to reflect the needs of older students more closely. Leaders are tracking the success of their interventions carefully so that they can identify when further action is needed.

Subject leaders and heads of year have an improved understanding of the academy's action plan. The introduction of heads of year for all secondary year groups has led to a sharper focus on learning in lessons. This is because pupils now receive targeted support that is actioned quickly. All middle leaders work closely together to ensure that pupils' attitudes to learning and attainment improve. They are increasingly held to account for the progress that pupils make towards challenging targets.

The restructured pastoral system at the secondary academy has led to a further drop in the number of exclusions and internal isolations since September. Attendance rates have improved across most year groups, significantly so for the sixth form. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced as a result of additional support for individual pupils and families. The new behaviour policy is being implemented more consistently by all staff. As a result, the number of behaviour incidents has reduced this term and pupils are more ready to learn.

Leaders have effective systems for monitoring the quality of teaching. When teaching is judged to be less than good, decisive action is taken. This has led to considerable staff changes since the inspection in November 2013. Leaders, parents and pupils consider that the standard of teaching across the academy has improved.

Leaders and governors have taken effective action to improve communication with parents and pupils. A parents' forum has been established to ensure that concerns can be responded to by leaders who attend forum meetings. This is used well to establish parental opinions and provide information about on-going improvements. The academy has also created a focus group of pupils so that their views concerning behaviour and safety can be considered. Recent surveys indicate that the number of concerns is reducing and opinions are more positive.

All tiers of academy governance are represented within the task group so that improvements can be agreed and actioned quickly. A common format for reporting the minutes of all meetings has been agreed and these show improved levels of support and challenge offered to academy leaders. Governors are also represented on the parents' forum to ensure that the views of all stakeholders are considered. Robust systems for monitoring behaviour ensure that governors are better informed and can identify when further improvements need to be made.

Strengths in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:

- Pupils say that behaviour has improved and that serious incidents are now very rare. They appreciate the improved levels of adult supervision, especially within the wider community at the start and end of the day. This has made them feel safer.
- Staff and pupils understand the higher expectations leaders have regarding behaviour. Pupils understand the policy for sanctions and rewards and recognize that attitudes towards learning need to improve further.

- The pastoral re-organisation within the secondary academy has improved leaders' capacity to meet the learning and behaviour needs of all pupils. This has included recognizing and rewarding positive attitudes as well as applying sanctions.
- The outdoor areas at both the primary and secondary sites have been improved. Playground and social areas can be used safely by pupils when participating in different activities. As a result, the number of injuries requiring first aid has significantly reduced and pupils are more considerate of each other.

Weaknesses in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:

- There is still too much low-level disruption within some lessons at the secondary academy. This interrupts learning and reduces the progress that pupils make in some subjects.
- Attendance levels in Year 9 have fallen. Too many pupils in this year group are persistently absent. The academy has not yet addressed this.
- The quality of teaching across all subjects at Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 is still too variable. Pupils' progress and achievement in some subjects remains below average at the end of Key Stage 4 and 5.
- Leaders have not taken account of recent statutory safeguarding changes. The academy's single central register and safeguarding policy have not been updated to reflect these changes.

External support

The academy continues to draw on support from the Haberdashers' Aske's Federation Trust. Temporary secondments of staff from academies from within the federation have been agreed when necessary. For example, an interim Head of English was provided until a new appointment was made for September. Training opportunities for staff are provided across the federation. A senior school improvement partner from the local authority and an external consultant are members of the task group. The academy commissions external reviews when necessary to inform their decisions about further changes. This ensures improvements are implemented quickly and effectively.