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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
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Mr Richard Farrow
Principal
Haberdashers' Aske's Crayford Academy
Iron Mill Lane
Crayford
Dartford
Kent
DA1 4RS

Dear Mr Farrow

Short inspection of Haberdashers' Aske's Crayford Academy

Following my visit to the school on 22 May 2018 with Stephen Hall and Colin Mackinlay, Ofsted Inspectors, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in December 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

You have responded effectively to several challenges facing the school since the previous inspection, including changes in leadership roles, and the opening of the new sixth form. The leadership team is now more firmly established. The sixth form is gaining recognition in the community, attracting increasing numbers of applications for places from both within the school and externally.

You and the governing body work closely with the Haberdashers' Aske's Federation. You have identified key areas of leadership that need to improve and facilitated appropriate support from the Federation. You ensure that senior and middle leaders receive valuable training opportunities so that they are better placed to hold their teams to account for the quality of their work.

Governors work well with the trust, which has oversight of the work of all the schools in the federation. Governors are alert to the aspects of the school that need improvement. They receive the training and guidance they need to support and challenge you and other leaders appropriately, and to check on the effectiveness of your actions.

You are seeking to improve communications with parents and carers. Leaders

produce frequent, informative newsletters and have set up a parents' forum to involve parents more with decisions about the school. You are aware that more needs to be done to engage positively with parents. The majority who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, expressed concern about how well the school communicates with them. They would like to find that all school leaders are equally approachable and consistent in dealing with parents' concerns.

Pupils are articulate and confident; they were welcoming and polite to the inspection team. They value their education. Pupils and students from all year groups said that they appreciate the way teachers help them when they find work difficult. However, they expressed concerns about the extent of staff changes and the occasions when their lessons are not well organised. Most parents who responded to Parent View expressed similar concerns.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. The school's safeguarding records are comprehensive and well organised. Staff are appropriately trained, aware of potential risks to pupils and raise concerns as they arise. There are efficient systems for communication and information sharing within the school and with outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support they need.

Pupils appreciate the opportunities for sixth-form students to act as their mentors. Pupils and parents are especially complimentary about the work of form tutors and pastoral leaders, such as heads of year, who they can talk to if they have any worries.

Inspection findings

- We agreed the first key line of enquiry would be to look at leaders' actions to improve standards of pupils' reading in key stages 1 and 2. This was because pupils' progress in reading at the end of key stage 2 declined in 2017 and their attainment was well below average.
- Leaders have rightly focused on improving standards of pupils' reading and are working to promote a culture of reading across the primary schools, using a range of initiatives. Routines are becoming established across the school. For example it is now expected that pupils take books home that challenge them sufficiently, and that teachers identify and focus on the specific reading skills that pupils find difficult.
- There is some evidence that these strategies have started to make a difference, including Year 6 pupils' stronger progress in reading. However, as shown by the school's own achievement information, pupils in key stage 2 are not yet making the progress necessary to reach and exceed the national average for attainment in reading.
- As a second key line of enquiry, we agreed to look at actions taken to improve outcomes for pupils in key stage 4, especially in humanities and science. This was

because pupils do less well in these subjects than in English and mathematics.

- Subject leaders have worked successfully with the trust to tackle underperformance in GCSE examinations. Early this academic year, leaders reviewed the curriculum and assessment in humanities subjects to ensure that staff have more reliable information about pupils' achievement. This has enabled leaders to put in place more targeted and effective support for pupils who are falling behind. The curriculum has also been reviewed in science.
- Subject leaders benefit from support from the trust to improve the quality of teaching in their departments. Staff are also receiving appropriate training and guidance so that they are better placed to prepare pupils effectively for their examinations.
- Leaders have set higher expectations for the quality of teachers' assessment of pupils' work. Some evidence of impact was found in humanities and science, with pupils improving their work and deepening their learning of a topic as a consequence. However, assessment practice remains inconsistent within and between departments.
- As a third key line of enquiry, we agreed to consider leaders' actions to enable pupils to overcome barriers to learning and reduce levels of persistent absence. This is because of concerns expressed about pupils' behaviour and the increase in persistent absence in recent years to above-average levels.
- Leaders had recognised the need to tighten and refine the school's systems for managing behaviour. They communicated their raised expectations to staff and pupils. The behaviour policy was adapted in consultation with pupils and drawing on good practice from other schools. Leaders' overview of teaching and analysis of pupils' behaviour records enabled them to identify where teachers needed training and support with behaviour management. Leaders have also sought to improve pupils' behaviour using rewards, including house points and reward trips.
- There are early indications of these strategies having a positive impact, with evidence of individual pupils improving their attitudes to learning. However, there is still work to be done to ensure that the behaviour policy is applied by teachers consistently and fairly. Pupils across most year groups have commented on regular incidents of pupils' poor behaviour around the school and when their learning is disrupted by poor behaviour. This is borne out by a range of inspection evidence, including responses to the pupil survey, the concerns expressed by many parents in Parent View, and views expressed by some staff.
- While overall attendance levels are above the national average, persistent absence has increased in recent years and is above average. Leaders have responded by liaising productively with a wide range of outside agencies. Staff work with dedication to provide individual pupils with the support they need to encourage regular attendance. As a consequence, levels of persistent absence have decreased in recent months.
- We agreed a fourth key line of enquiry to consider leaders' actions to raise students' achievement in the sixth form and prepare them for the next steps in their education or employment. This is because the school's first set of A-level results, in 2017, indicated that students' progress was below that of their peers

nationally.

- Leaders identified that the sixth-form curriculum was not meeting students' needs. Appropriate changes were made to the range and type of courses available and to the careers education and guidance programme to help students make the right choices. Students have also been given a wide range of enrichment opportunities relevant to their career aspirations.
- The school has been making effective use of external support, including from the trust, to improve the quality of teaching in a number of key subject areas in the sixth form.
- Together, these changes have led to improvement on several fronts. The school's own assessment information indicates that students' progress is improving. All students have been able to make successful applications to higher education, apprenticeships or employment. The changes are also reflected in the steadily increasing popularity of the sixth form for the school's own students and external applicants.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they further develop and consolidate strategies to improve pupils' reading so that there is consistency of practice across both primary school sites
- strong practice within and between subject areas is shared so that the quality of teaching is consistently high, leading to improved outcomes for pupils
- the revised behaviour policy is firmly applied, embedded and used consistently so that all pupils and students have a positive experience of school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bexley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Carter-Fraser
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

Members of the inspection team met with school leaders, including governors and the chief executive officer. I also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

Inspectors visited classrooms, sometimes accompanied by school leaders, to observe the learning that was taking place. We looked at examples of pupils' work.

One inspector listened to some pupils read. Inspectors met formally with groups of pupils and held informal conversations with staff and pupils around the school. We observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during breaktimes, lunchtime and between lessons.

We scrutinised a wide range of documentation including: the school's self-evaluation; records relating to behaviour and attendance; the school's own achievement information; minutes of meetings of the governing body; and records relating to the safeguarding of pupils, including the single central record.

We looked at the responses to Parent View, completed by 181 parents, and the responses to surveys completed by 73 members of staff and 163 pupils. We took into account correspondence from parents. Inspectors met, or held a telephone conversation with, members of pupils' families, at their or the school's request.