

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Joe Edgar
Principal
Haberdashers' Abraham Darby
Ironbridge Road
Madeley
Telford
Shropshire
TF7 5HX

Dear Mrs Edgar

Monitoring inspection of a school not in a category of concern of Haberdashers' Abraham Darby

This letter sets out the findings from the monitoring inspection that took place on 23 October 2024 on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school meets the monitoring threshold as set out in the [Monitoring Inspection Handbook](#).

The purpose of a monitoring inspection is not to grade the school's key and provision judgements, but to identify and report on the school's progress. It is to highlight to the school and parents any improvements that school leaders have made since the school's previous graded inspection.

During the inspection, I discussed with you and other senior leaders, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, the chair of the trustees and the chair of governors the actions that have been taken to improve the school since the most recent graded inspection. We discussed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, met with pupils and staff and scrutinised documents relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. I observed pupils during their breaktimes and spoke with members of staff on duty. I also reviewed the school's single central record to assess the checks made for the recruitment of new staff. I have considered all this in coming to my judgement.

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but some aspects of the school need further improvement.

Main findings

Since the last inspection you have made changes to the structure of leadership following your permanent appointment as principal. You have restructured the roles within the senior leadership team. For example, the appointment of a senior vice principal has allowed for clearer lines of sight in terms of areas of responsibility. Improved accountability and communication with all stakeholders was evident during the inspection. In some areas, leaders are not fully clear as to the impact of their work and ensuring that best practice is shared effectively within the school. You have benefited from external and internal support to effect the changes you have put in place. The recent appointment of a CEO of the trust has added further capacity.

During this inspection, we focused on the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection relating to the behaviour of pupils, their attendance and the consistency of communication with pupils and parents. The evidence shows that you have taken decisive and well-chosen actions to address these areas. There is an appropriate sense of urgency to the changes you are making. Staff are working well with you to implement these changes and pupils are responding well too.

Following the last inspection, you actively reviewed the behaviour and attendance systems along with how the pastoral structure supports pupils throughout their life in school. The change to a more year-focused mentor system, along with additional staff, has allowed you to be more strategically responsive to pupils' needs. You now hold a comprehensive understanding of pupils' behaviours, both positive and negative, exhibited in school since the beginning of the academic year. This has allowed you to identify where additional support and resources are required and then act accordingly. Staff appreciate the clarity of the work done around behaviour and the systems to support this. Both staff and pupils reflect an improved experience. They say this is helping in the classroom, around school and in communication with parents.

During the inspection I visited a range of subjects and year groups. Along with yourself, we saw calm and focused learning from pupils. Pupils who I spoke to were able to explain their current work and reflect on their improved experience in the classroom. A few pupils were seen truanting lessons and in each case a member of staff was accompanying them to calmly re-engage them in school life. You know these pupils well and are working to support them. The school needs to continue to refine this work to maximise its effectiveness in supporting these pupils to attend their lessons.

Suspensions have been too high in the past and you recognised that a change in approach was required. The renewed behaviour system with well-defined boundaries and rewards has been implemented since the start of this academic year. You have ensured that the high expectations and details of this changed system have been communicated to all stakeholders. Pupils enjoy being recognised for doing the right thing in lessons and like receiving house points to access the school's 'celebration' days. Pupils seen and spoken to at breaktimes show a clear knowledge of the routines. They report enjoying the

leadership opportunities available in school and make the most of the range of sporting and musical activities they can be involved in.

Staff reflected that the renewed behaviour system is helping them. For example, they know that the focus on starting lessons in a consistent fashion is reaping benefits for the pupils being able to settle quickly to work. Staff share leaders' understanding that greater consistency will continue to improve the school for all. This should remain a priority to ensure that there is a consistent approach to managing behaviour and that staff are well supported in this regard.

Attendance of pupils has been a key area of focus for you. The school's work has begun to show impact over the last year. Leaders hold a clear and detailed picture around the attendance and it is connected well to safeguarding. You have established and developed systems and procedures to support clear communication with pupils around their attendance. Pupils know that being in school is important and appreciate the recognition they receive when they attend frequently. Punctuality is improving, but you recognise there is still more work to do. You are still in the process of determining how all relevant information about pupils, for example in relation to either behaviour or other additional needs, is consistently used to support them in attending well.

Assisted by the wider Haberdashers' family of schools, as well as some external support, you have made changes to the school and how you monitor performance. For example, you have changed the school's values and outlined exactly how you would like these to be upheld by staff and pupils alike. Additional capacity within the trust leadership is helping to maintain the strategic perspective of leaders within the school. The clarity of communication between and from senior leaders has improved and this is reflected in the experience of staff and pupils. You have taken opportunities to learn from schools with a similar contextual background and been careful in how you have applied that learning to the school. Continuing to assess the impact of, and making further improvements to, the communication with parents and pupils continues to be important.

Safeguarding is effective. Leaders have clear systems in place to identify pupils at risk of potential harm. A well-developed and systematic approach to dealing with disclosures ensures that leaders take decisive and timely action to support vulnerable pupils. Extra capacity in the pastoral team enables trained staff to deal with issues as they arise. A coordinated pastoral approach, using tracking and strong lines of communication, ensures that support is timely and appropriate.

You are appreciative of the support given by Matrix Academy Trust in helping you to work out how to best approach the improvements needed. This has been used by you to adjust values, processes and procedures, particularly in the light of the school's context. You have implemented needed changes and have taken the time to provide clarity to stakeholders, such as parents, as to what these are and why they are happening.

Relationships between governors, trustees and leaders are positive and purposeful. Governors and trustees are well informed about the school's development priorities and

the progress now being made to achieve them. You recognise that, while progress has been made, there are still areas to review and develop further for greater consistency. You have a realistic evaluation of the school's current strengths and challenges. A strong sense of unity exists amongst leaders and staff. Staff comment on how the culture in school has changed for the better.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO of the Haberdashers' West Midlands Academies trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Telford and Wrekin. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Richard Wakefield
His Majesty's Inspector