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Gary Kynaston
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Kynaston

Short inspection of Hammersmith Academy

Following my visit to the school on 1 March 2017 with Dennis Canty, Ofsted Inspector, 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 February 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Your clear vision, drive and determination has created a school that has earned the respect and the confidence of the local community. You have established a culture of high aspirations for all members of the school, underpinned by effective systems and structures. With the support of your effective leadership team and a committed governing body, you have created an inclusive and nurturing environment that values the learning needs of both pupils and staff. All share your vision of the 'gold standard' of education you are determined to provide. Staff describe the school as a 'dynamic' and 'energising' place to work and pupils share this view. You are committed to pupils' academic, emotional and creative development, and are steadfast in your plans to achieve this. You know that there is more to be done to ensure that all pupils make the same excellent progress as others, particularly for some disadvantaged pupils, and you have an effective plan to support this.

Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons continues to be exemplary. You and your staff have created a culture of mutual respect, tolerance and pride. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is given high priority and consequently, pupils value and celebrate differences. The unifying ethos of high aspirations and collective pride, means that pupils are keen to learn, work hard and value the opportunities they are given. Participation in school events is high, and attendance for the majority of pupils is above the national average.

You have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified during the inspection in February 2013. You have worked closely with your experienced and highly professional governing body, to ensure that they are well informed and receive regular training. As a result, they are knowledgeable about the strengths of the school and empowered to ask searching questions about the decisions you and your team make. They know which groups of pupils do not make the same good progress as others in the school and work collaboratively with you to address this. Governors are proud of their popular and inclusive community school. They share your high aspirations for every pupil and are committed to equality of opportunity, irrespective of pupils' starting points.

Together, you, your leaders and governors, work tirelessly to gather the views of parents, carers and pupils. The creation of the Junior Leadership Team (JLT) and sixth form student leaders, provide a forum for pupils to share their concerns and voice their opinions. Media mentors involved in the primary induction programme and sixth form students mentoring Year 11, allow you to gather pupils' opinions. As the school has grown, you have incorporated these views, while maintaining Hammersmith Academy's core vision and values.

Safeguarding is effective.

You, your leaders and governors, have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements, and records are detailed and of high quality. You have created a culture of safeguarding pupils' welfare, where staff are highly vigilant and understand that it is their responsibility to keep pupils safe. All staff have been trained in level 1 safeguarding, and a fortnightly safeguarding bulletin ensures that their knowledge and that of governors, is kept up to date. Equally, parents receive information about how they can keep their children safe in the wider community. Checks on the suitability of staff to work at the school are detailed and in line with current guidelines. The school's safeguarding leads work closely with the Tri-Borough outreach group to ensure that referrals are timely and that pupils receive effective support quickly. The school site is secure, well maintained and, though compact, well ordered and highly organised during informal times.

Pupils are very clear about the support they receive through the vertical tutoring system and the 'student achievement managers' (SAMs). The online referral system means that pupils and parents can share their concerns and access help at any time. This is highly valued and regularly used since its launch. Pupils told inspectors that school staff were quick to deal with any concerns they might have. Governors and leaders track these referrals and use it to inform bespoke support for individuals and ensure that wider issues are mapped into registration and assembly time. Parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire were very positive about the support their children receive and the school's 'zero-tolerance' towards bullying. One parent reported that her son explained, 'everyone feels inspired, everyone works hard and everyone cares about one another'.

Inspection findings

- The majority of pupils at key stage 4, follow a traditional English Baccalaureate curriculum, which includes English, mathematics, sciences, humanities and a modern foreign language. The first set of GCSE results in 2016 revealed some inconsistencies in terms of pupils' progress across some subject areas. As a result, school leaders have reviewed some of the courses on offer and the GCSE option process. Pupils now receive more detailed guidance on their GCSE choices and the quality of teaching and learning on identified courses has been improved.
- Equally, in the sixth form, leaders have raised the criteria for entry on to specific courses, to ensure that students have the ability to make good progress and achieve highly. The current Year 12 are the first cohort of 'home-grown' students, and received a comprehensive programme of information so that they could make informed choices about their further education. A range of 16 to 19 study programmes are available, including GCSE retakes, A-level and vocational courses. Students' progress on these courses is carefully tracked and bespoke support offered as necessary. As a result, information provided by school leaders indicates that current students are making good progress.
- Staff and pupils understand the culture of high aspiration established by school leaders and achieved through self-reflection and self-improvement. Staff are encouraged to set themselves targets around their teaching, and are effectively supported to achieve them through the professional development programme.
- The '4 Rs' of resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness and reciprocity permeate throughout the curriculum and pupils' learning. Teachers consistently refer to these skills and consequently, pupils understand how to improve their learning and take responsibility for it. Work seen during the inspection, showed regular examples of pupils reviewing their writing, attempting more challenging activities from the choice on offer and actively responding to their teachers' advice and guidance. This culture of pupils taking responsibility for their learning is well established across the school.
- Improving literacy is a high priority across the school. Pupils carry a reading book as part of their 'power of three' resources and there are regular opportunities for them to read for pleasure. They spoke to inspectors with pride about their school library and when reading to inspectors, did so with enthusiasm and skill. Pupils are encouraged to focus on the quality of their written expression throughout all key stages and, consequently, are reflective writers.
- Support for the small number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong and aspiration for their progress high. Teachers are given a range of strategies to ensure that pupils access classroom activities and teaching assistants offer effective support where needed. The majority of these pupils attend regularly, though the attendance of those with severe medical conditions is more sporadic. Alternative qualifications are offered for a small minority of pupils. Leaders at all levels are aware of which of these pupils are at risk of underachieving and support plans are in place.
- School leaders are not complacent. They know that some groups of pupils, particularly the most able disadvantaged, do not make the same progress as

pupils nationally or of other pupils at the school. They forensically track the progress of all pupils across each year group and have identified those that need to make more substantial progress. Teachers regularly assess pupils' progress and record relevant information on the 'pupil progress maps'. This information ensures that individual pupil's needs are consistently used to inform teachers' planning of activities.

- Pupil premium funding is used to support individuals and wider school initiatives. Leaders, including governors, regularly check that planned activities are having a direct impact on the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and amend as necessary. A collective drive to improve the progress made by disadvantaged pupils across the school is having a demonstrable impact. Pupils benefit from consistently good teaching, bespoke interventions as necessary and access to a range of support and wider opportunities. Gaps in progress between this group, their peers and pupils nationally are reducing as a result.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- identified groups of pupils, particularly the most able disadvantaged, make significant progress from their starting points in order to catch up with pupils nationally.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hammersmith and Fulham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

The inspectors carried out the following activities:

- meetings with the headteacher, associate headteacher, senior and middle leaders, governors and those new to teaching
- pupils in Year 8 were heard reading
- visits to a number of classes with senior leaders
- scrutiny of disadvantaged pupils' work and discussions with pupils
- informal discussions with pupils and students in the sixth form

- 51 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 52 responses to the staff survey and 115 responses to the pupils' survey plus a letter from a parent were taken into account
- an evaluation of documents provided by the school, including school development plans, reviews, governors' minutes of meetings, safeguarding records and information about current pupils' achievement.