

10 December 2018

Dear Parent/Carer,

We wanted to write at our earliest opportunity about the recent Ofsted monitoring visit to update you on inspectors' findings now that we have received their report.

As you know Hillsview was placed in Special Measures in May 2017. Since then, we appointed Mrs Gemma Simon as the new Principal in June this year. Mrs Simon has a proven track record of turning around schools that have faced challenges in the past, and she has been working tirelessly to do the same at Hillsview.

Indeed Mrs Simon's efforts are recognised in Ofsted's report that has just been published, and inspectors note that staff, pupils and parents are all unequivocal in their view that she is making a positive difference, and staff are fully supportive of her vision and determination to improve the quality of provision for all pupils.

Overall, while the report concludes that there is more work to be done at Hillsview, it also highlights a number of positive developments at the academy since the previous monitoring inspection:

- The school is now fully staffed, with new appointments made in history, geography, maths and drama. A number of support staff roles have also been filled and Hillsview also now benefits from additional leadership support from AET through a System Leader, who is also an experienced Principal with a track record of rapid school improvement.
- Leaders have established The Haven – a new area within school where pupils can receive additional support in a nurturing environment.
- New systems to check on the quality of teaching and pupil outcomes.
- Higher expectations being set in some subjects, including maths which is starting to have a positive impact.
- Behaviour in school has improved, with pupils much calmer in the corridors as a result of a good staff presence meaning that any issues are addressed quickly. This has also reduced internal truancy and the number of pupils arriving late for school has also decreased.
- Better communication between home and school, including parents now being able to view a record of their child's rewards and any behaviour issues online.
- Rates of absence has declined, with attendance having improved by 4% points and there has been a marked reduction in fixed term exclusions – 41% points lower than this time last year.

Ofsted note that pupils are proud of their school. They also point in particular to the enthusiasm of pupils who are Student Ambassadors in the newly established student council and the active role they want to play in helping further improve their school.

These are all positive signs, but our focus now is on how we can make further improvements at pace. We are very clear about the areas that we need to focus on over the coming period, including:

- Improving attendance and persistent absence further (which are already improving under Mrs Simon's leadership)
- Improving the quality of teaching and learning further so that there is less variability across different subjects, classes and year groups
- Reducing further the number of exclusions (which have also already reduced significantly under Mrs Simon's leadership).

Everyone at AET, the trust that runs the Academy, is absolutely committed to providing Mrs Simon and her team with the support that is needed to turn Hillsview around. We are also working closely with the Department for Education, the local authority and other schools to make the improvements that are needed.

We anticipate that we will have another monitoring visit from Ofsted next term, and we expect that report to note that we are taking effective action with a view to the academy then coming out of the 'special measures' category completely in either the summer or autumn term 2019. We will be sure to keep you updated on this as and when these inspections take place.

Yours sincerely,



David Hatchett
National Director of Secondary Schools
Academies Enterprise Trust



Robert Turner
Chairman of Governors
Hillsview Academy