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Mr Gareth Nichols  
Executive Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Nichols

### **Short inspection of Hibaldstow Academy**

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 2017, 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 July 2013.

### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your colleagues, staff, governors and the trustees of the academy all have a very good understanding of the needs of the school and the community it serves. The school's supportive and protective culture permeates all that the school does to keep pupils safe and secure at school, and is particularly sensitive to the considerable challenges that some face in their lives. Pupils trust all staff, safe in the knowledge that teachers will help them if any issues arise at home or school. Parents value the high regard and respect staff show to them and their children. They acknowledge very emphatically that the school goes over and above the call of duty to support their children's personal and academic development. The school is a calm, orderly environment where pupils grow and flourish and make good progress in their learning, irrespective of their starting points, that for many are very low.

All staff are committed to school improvement. They understand what leaders are working to achieve, and fully support leaders in realising their high aspirations for the pupils. Staff hold the interest of pupils at the heart of all they do. They feel valued, enjoy working at the school and are proud to be part of it. Governors are committed to the school. They share the staff's passion for pupils' success. They are very knowledgeable and hold leaders to account successfully for the school's performance in every respect.

The leadership team has taken swift and effective action to raise the quality of teaching and bring about the rapid improvements needed to maintain a good quality of education. Leaders have a clear vision for school improvement which is understood and shared by all staff. You and all senior leaders and managers have a detailed and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas in need of further improvement. You have ensured that clear plans are in place to address these, and check rigorously that the impact of any actions you take are effective. For example, in your last inspection, you were asked to improve the feedback teachers gave to pupils to help them improve their work. Pupils now receive very detailed feedback and are making even better progress as a result.

Another area for development from the previous inspection was to increase the opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills across other subjects. Work in pupils' books and around the school shows that pupils plot graphs to illustrate temperatures and rainfall levels in geography, and record and analyse with interest data from their investigations in science. You were also asked to set pupils more challenging targets. The information you gather from assessments of pupils' progress is accurate and reliable. Teachers are using this information to inform their planning effectively. This reflects good improvement, but there is still work to do to ensure that the most able pupils, particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils, are challenged further, particularly in their writing and mathematics, so that even more pupils work at greater depth.

A high number of pupils join the school part-way through their primary education, particularly in key stage 2. Many of these pupils are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Through the effective measures you have in place to integrate new arrivals and 'buddy' them up with classmates, you ensure that these pupils settle into school quickly. You swiftly check pupils' starting points on entry to your school and use the results to inform teaching and learning, making sure that these pupils have the help they need to achieve well. However, interruptions in their learning through changing schools, often more than once, can sometimes slow their progress. Pupils who are at the school for almost all of their primary education achieve well. Those joining late in key stage 2 sometimes are not at the school long enough to benefit from all that the school has to offer.

The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged is effective. Regular reviews of pupils' progress ensure that teaching, including individual programmes of support, is well suited to meet pupils' needs. Consequently, these pupils achieve well against their generally low starting points. This inclusive approach to meet the needs of all pupils is appreciated by parents. One parent said, 'All staff really show interest in your child and family. They are always there for you. I could not have coped without the help I have had from school.'

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Pupils' safety is of paramount importance to everyone at the school. Pupils feel safe and parents reiterate this strongly. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe is developed effectively through activities such as anti-bullying week, road safety training and internet safety in assemblies and through the curriculum. Pupils trust all adults at the school to act to keep them safe. They say there is no bullying or name-calling, 'because we just don't do that here'. They are confident that if bullying did occur it 'would be sorted out

quickly'.

Leaders are rigorous in their checks as to the suitability of staff to work with children. The induction of new staff is thorough and includes up-to-date training on the dangers posed by extremist views and keeping children safe. The school's systems for recording incidents of concern are very well developed and detailed, with the school often taking the lead role in securing the safety and welfare of pupils. As a result of a strong safeguarding culture, pupils feel safe in the school and know that they can talk to staff about the things that worry them. They know that staff will listen to them and follow up their concerns. One parent said that they are pleased that their child is 'part of such a caring and friendly school environment'.

The vigilance from all staff ensures that pupils' welfare and well-being are high priority. Attendance is good. Absences are followed up promptly, particularly in cases where pupils are more vulnerable. The learning mentor and designated staff ensure that any referrals to outside agencies receive immediate attention so that pupils and their families receive the necessary support to help them move forward successfully.

## **Inspection findings**

- The inspection focused on key lines of enquiry which we agreed at the start of the inspection. The first of these was checking the quality of teaching and learning, and the level of challenge for the most able pupils throughout the school. Leaders have ensured that systems for monitoring the performance of staff are rigorous. Staff are held to account closely and have clear targets which they are supported to achieve. Senior leaders have an accurate awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. The quality of teaching is improving rapidly. As a result, pupils are making good progress across all year groups, including in the early years.
- I also looked in detail at the school's assessment and tracking systems to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to make good progress. 'Pupils' progress' meetings are rigorous and governors and the trustees of the academy check that pupils are on track to meet their targets. Extra support is arranged for those at risk of falling behind at any stage. In addition, staff assess very closely the starting points of those pupils who join the school part-way through their primary education. All these checks and measures ensure that pupils generally make the best progress they can in the time they have at the school.
- School leaders have put in place a wide range of effective support to help disadvantaged pupils to make good progress in English and mathematics. This includes extra individual support in pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills, and time to listen to pupils read. Leaders monitor pupils' progress carefully and adjust groupings as necessary. You provided information that shows the good rates of progress of disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. This was reflected in the work that I saw in pupils' books. The difference in the progress between disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils is diminishing. However, leaders are aware of the need for continued focus to ensure that the progress of the most able disadvantaged pupils is maintained and further developed.

- I also looked closely at the teaching of reading because pupils' outcomes in reading in 2016 at the end of Year 6 were not as strong as in previous years. This was largely due to the slower progress of the disadvantaged pupils who joined part-way in key stage 2 and who had considerable gaps in their learning. The teaching of phonics is systematic and effective. Pupils in Reception and key stage 1 learn to read quickly through regular and intensive phonics lessons. Pupils enjoy the challenge of matching letters to sounds and progress quickly to reading fluently. Leaders and teachers have focused on the importance of developing pupils' understanding of texts and vocabulary. Teachers model good reading skills and probe pupils' precise understanding of words and phrases. Pupils enjoy reading and love to discuss the characters and plots of stories they like. Pupils develop their love of reading and extend their understanding of how writers use language to engage the reader.
- The teaching of writing and mathematics is also systematic and effective and usually serves pupils' needs well. For example, I saw children in the early years explore capacity by considering if differently shaped containers held more or less water. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 tackled algebra with confidence using the limited information they had to find missing numbers. While they make good progress against their low starting points, the most able are not challenged sufficiently to work at greater depth and achieve more in these subjects.
- Teachers enhance pupils' learning through the many clubs, trips and residential visits that raise their awareness of the world beyond school and of different cultures and traditions. A bustling breakfast club provides pupils with a prompt and healthy start to the school day. The school choir participating in a local music festival and gaining second place was an excellent achievement and a highlight on the day of the inspection. Pupils and parents value the wide range of opportunities the school provides to enrich pupils' learning.
- Pupils behave well. They are polite and friendly. Relationships in the school are warm, relaxed and respectful. Staff act as good role models and pupils follow their example. Parents who presented their views during the inspection said that the school is a happy place which, as one said, is 'just as it should be'. The school teaches children to be kind and respect others. They love learning and try their best at all times.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the progress of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, increases to be in line with other pupils nationally
- all pupils achieve as well in their writing and mathematics as they do in reading.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the board of trustees, the regional

schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rajinder Harrison  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I met with you and your deputy, the chair of the governing body and two other governors, including members of the academy trust and staff. I also met with a representative of the local authority and had a telephone conversation with your school improvement partner. I analysed a range of documentation, including information about pupils' achievement, the school improvement plan and safeguarding checks, policies and procedures. We discussed your own evaluation of the school's effectiveness. I observed pupils around the school, as they came into school and in their classes. Together we visited all classes and some small-group work. In the classes, I observed teaching, looked at books, spoke to pupils about their work and listened to them read. I also met with pupils to get their views of the school. I considered the views of the 14 staff who completed the Ofsted online staff survey. I took account of the 10 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including text responses, and I also spoke with a number of parents at the start of the school day.