



**Drapers' Academy**

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6<sup>th</sup> December 2017

Dear Parents/Carers,

As you know, Ofsted inspected Drapers' Academy on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2017. I am now writing to you to emphasise the key points raised in the report.

We were pleased that the inspectors chose to highlight many of the school's strengths, including the following:

- The school is improving. Inspectors noted that the outcomes for pupils in English are much better than they were. As well as English, they cited the good teaching in mathematics, technology, PE and the arts (art, drama and music), in all of which our pupils progress well. They praised our use of phonics tuition (in particular the Read, Write, Inc. programme), recognising that it improves pupils' reading markedly.
- The inspectors described our school as being calm and orderly. Pupils are polite to visitors, show respect for the school environment and conduct themselves sensibly around the site. Pupils are clear that everyone should be treated equally and with respect, regardless of background, religion or sexual orientation.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are positive. The teachers have the interests of their pupils at heart. Pupils want to do well and take great pride in their work. The inspectors also made positive comments about how our pupils behave during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The inspectors judged our Sixth Form to be providing a "good" education. Staff have high expectations of students and challenge them effectively to make good progress and achieve their best. Our teachers know their students well and have good subject knowledge, enabling them to ask probing questions that make students think and work hard. In addition, students' learning experiences are enriched by a range of extra-curricular provision, such as culture days, external speakers, workshops and bespoke input. Sixth Form students are good role models for the younger pupils in the way they conduct themselves around the school.

The inspectors commented that the appointment of a new Principal in January 2015 and a subsequent re-structuring of the senior leadership team had helped to halt the previous decline in pupils' progress. Although outcomes in English and maths have improved since the last inspection, inspectors noted that this was not the case in some other subjects. They noted that senior leaders, including governors, have an accurate understanding of the areas where development is required. They told us that the school needs to improve in some areas in order to ensure that our practices – and therefore our outcomes – are consistent throughout the school.

To help the school improve, we need your support in the following areas:

- Attendance – Pupils need to come to school regularly. If a pupil does not come to school regularly, he or she will inevitably find it harder to learn and to make progress. Our attendance levels are below the national average; and this is hindering the progress of those pupils who do not attend regularly.
- Reading at home – Pupils need to read more widely. As part of this, they should develop the habit of reading when they are out of school.
- Homework – Some pupils do not take their homework seriously enough. As a direct result, they are missing out on opportunities to learn.

The inspectors noted that the Academy has invested significantly in training to improve further the standard of teaching. This will enable us to improve across the school, in particular in those subjects for which outcomes are below the levels we see in our highest-performing subjects. As part of this, we will ensure that lessons are planned to challenge all pupils, not just some. We will continue to embed our culture of high aspirations; and we will continue to have high expectations both of our staff and our pupils.

We were encouraged by the lead inspector’s comment that the strategies we have in place to improve our school are already having an impact. These now need to be established consistently throughout the school. In the meantime, the evidence of some inconsistency within the school has persuaded the inspectors to grade us as a school that “requires improvement”. This does not mean that ours is a school in decline. Far from it. Our many strengths and successful outcomes demonstrate otherwise, as noted by the inspectors themselves. We confess to feeling disappointed by Ofsted’s overall judgment of the school; but we are also encouraged by the recognition of the “green shoots” being generated by our systems and by what the inspectors have identified as the school’s capacity to improve further.

We will make some strategic changes, but not too many, since the inspectors made it clear to us that what we are already doing is right for our pupils. I, my staff and the governing body all remain committed to providing the high-quality education that our pupils deserve.

We are likely to be re-inspected between 12 and 24 months from now. With your continued partnership and support, we anticipate that at the next inspection we will be judged at least “good” across the school, not just in our Sixth Form.

A copy of the full inspection report can be found on the school’s website.

Yours faithfully,



Mr Darren Luckhurst  
Principal

