

15th March 2024

Dear Parents

I am writing following our recent Ofsted Monitoring visit which took place on 2nd February 2024 and has now been uploaded to the Ofsted website. The purpose of a monitoring visit is to identify and report on the school's progress and the actions school leaders have taken since the last inspection.

I am delighted to inform you that as a school, we have made progress on many of the areas identified during our full inspection. However, we need to embed the strategies teachers are using for checking understanding and the development of pupils' reading, ensuring routines are implemented fully and consistently. As with the inspection report, the letter only provides you with a brief overview and therefore I hope this letter provides you with a little more detail on the progress we have made.

Our overarching strategy for school improvement has been carefully designed and planned. We have not opted for 'quick-fixes' but have utilised the expertise of external partners and current research, to ensure that the changes we make are impactful and sustainable. Everything we do at Hurstmere is to enable our boys to achieve their full potential and to be supported in becoming the very best version of themselves not just to achieve an Ofsted rating.

We are constantly reviewing and evaluating our curriculum provision and delivery, with Curriculum Leaders ensuring that all pupils are better supported in securing the knowledge they need. Our approach is underpinned by the assertion that all pupils need a solid foundation of core knowledge if they are to progress. We have been developing our 'Hurstmere Way' inspired by the work of one of the leading academics, Rosenshine and the use of direct instruction; promoting a knowledge rich curriculum, retrieval practice, modelling of new concepts and stages of collaborative practice through to independent working. Our boys are now well versed in the structure of lessons and our classroom expectations for learning. The final piece, as identified in our monitoring visit is the systematic checking for understanding.

Since the start of this half-term, staff have been receiving weekly training on the use of mini whiteboards enthused by the work of Adam Boxer. They are a simple, yet powerful way of teachers being able to assess the learning of pupils. I am sure the boys will be coming home very soon talking to you about how they are being trained in using them.

Senior and Middle Leaders frequently carry out learning walks, quality assurance visits and drop-ins. All of these methods of QA direct our proactive approach to staff training. We want to respond quickly to areas where teachers require more support and not only do we look to external partners to deliver this training but also, we look to the myriad of expertise we have amongst our very talented staff. This year, all our staff belong to a research group, looking into the most effective strategies we can implement to maximise the progress our boys make ensuring that we are at the forefront of educational practice.

Each week, I am fortunate enough to meet a group of pupils to discuss their lived experience in school. They are reporting to me the changes they are seeing in their lessons and the impact that the raising of expectations around behaviour has had. They like our very clear 3Rs system, Remind,



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Reinforce and Remove and this has been reflected in the Ofsted monitoring report with the noting of the calm atmosphere that permeates across the school. However, we are all too aware, pockets of poor behaviour still exist and continue to be challenged. All our boys are fully aware of the expectations and the vast majority are complying and reaping the reward of less low-level disruption in classes and those that are not, are experiencing our sanctions. Like you, we believe that young people should not have their education disrupted by the poor behaviour of others and we will continue to work with these individuals and their families.

Alongside the work on our behaviour systems with the Department for Education's Behaviour Hub programme, we have been looking at our rewards system and will be delighted to share with you our new rewards system during the summer term.

Recruitment of quality teaching staff remains a national issue and we are exploring all avenues to secure the very best teachers we can for our boys. I am delighted that our Middle Leader appointments have been hugely successful along with the appointment of staff into AEN, who have strengthened our provision considerably in supporting young people with Special Educational Needs.

As part of our work following the previous inspection, new staff were recruited to add capacity and work undertaken to ensure that staff are fully aware of the needs of all our young people. This continues to be on-going as young people's needs change and we seek their views in what support benefits them most. Our vocational programme and link with Shooters Hill College are also benefiting some of our young people enormously.

I am immensely proud of the all the achievements of our boys and we have so much to celebrate every day. This week alone we have seen the success of Year 7 and 11 football teams having won cup finals with more to follow, chicks hatching in our science labs and a Zoolab visit providing the boys with a hands-on experience. We have had an Oxbridge Awareness conference for Year 10 pupils and today, pupils from Years 7, 8 and 9 are visiting Kew Gardens for a STEM event.

We believe that school should be more than the 5 one-hour lessons a day our boys are exposed to and take great pride in the opportunities we are able to provide. You can keep up to date with life at Hurstmere by following us on our social media platforms as well as the half-termly newsletter.

Year 10 parents please remember that we have our 'How to Support Your Son' event on Tuesday 19th March and for parents of pupils in Year 9, the Academic Mentoring Day is on Wednesday 20th March as the boys prepare to make their GCSE Options.

We are committed to ensuring that we are providing the best possible experience for our boys here at Hurstmere and will continue our relentless drive to make Hurstmere the best non-selective school in Bexley and the school of choice for parents of boys and will eagerly await Ofsted's next visit when we will demonstrate to them just how far we have come on our improvement journey.

Thank you as always for your continued support of Hurstmere School and with that strong home school partnership our boys will continue to flourish.

With my very best wishes,



Lynn Bennett
Principal