Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to let you know the outcome of our recent Ofsted inspections. The original inspection took place over two days on 26th to 27th November 2013 and involved lesson observations, a scrutiny of pupils’ work, staff and parental questionnaires and discussions with pupils, parents, staff, governors and the local authority.

You will, I am sure, have been wondering what has happened to the inspection report that should have been generated by now. There has been an extensive delay as a result of concerns we had about the conduct of the original inspection. During the inspection we made a verbal complaint about the process and followed this up with a detailed written complaint to Ofsted about a number of concerns, including the completeness of the evidence gathered by the inspectors with which they formed their judgements. Ofsted subsequently acknowledged that the evidence upon which the original judgement was based was flawed. In response, an additional team of two of Her Majesty’s Inspectors (HMI) carried out a one-day extension to the original inspection in February to gather further evidence.

Judgments were made on four areas of the school’s performance resulting in a judgement on its overall effectiveness. The outcome of the inspection was that the school was found to have a ‘serious weakness’ under the judgement of behaviour and safety principally as a result of behaviour that inspectors observed of a small number of very difficult young people in the secondary phase of the Academy. We are however pleased that inspectors also noted the very good behaviour of the large majority of secondary pupils and all the children in the primary phase. In addition we are pleased that inspectors could see the substantial improvements that have been made in the overall achievement of our pupils with results across the primary and secondary phases being around or above national averages. The ‘serious weakness’ category identifies weaknesses, but recognises HMI’s confidence that the Leadership Team and Governors have the capacity to improve the school and move it quickly to a better judgement.

I hope you will be able to read the full report and see how much of it is very positive about the Academy and about the improvements being made. We are clear, as I believe are Ofsted, that the Academy’s improvement is firmly embedded and sustainable and that there have been significant improvements since the last inspection. The Ofsted report comments in some detail on the many strengths of the Academy and describes some of the excellent work and conduct by our pupils. As a result of all of this recognition of our good work at the Academy you can I am sure imagine that we are very disappointed with the final Ofsted judgement. We are very clear though that it is in the best interest of our pupils to put all our efforts into rapidly addressing the issues identified to improve our school further and secure the best outcomes for your children.

It has of course been a number of months since the original inspection. In that time we have already taken some significant steps to address the issues raised by Ofsted. For example:
We have established a task group of governors, senior staff from the Federation and an experienced former HMI, who has also been appointed to work with the Academy, to supervise the work that is needed over the coming months;

We have commissioned landscaping work on the outside play areas at both primary and secondary schools to designate and zone the space for different uses. In addition working with pupils, we have designated a ‘quiet room’ distinct from the library and SEN area during lunch time where pupils are able to go;

Two new governors have been inducted to strengthen the Academy governing body and to provide particular expertise to challenge and support the school;

A review of the use and monitoring of the inclusion and the referral rooms has been conducted to inform further action;

Staff have received further training on how to respond to pupils through our anti-bullying policy and in addition, we have clarified the Academy’s policy and response to the unacceptable use of discriminatory and derogatory homophobic language to all pupils.

Over the coming months it is more essential than ever that we draw upon your views and your support to accelerate the changes that are already in hand. You will therefore be invited to attend a forum to discuss the outcomes of the inspection and the actions that the Governors and school have already taken to address some of the areas highlighted, as well as our plans for the future.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you in anticipation of your continued support. You have my commitment and that of the governors and staff that we will continue in our relentless efforts to improve standards of achievement, teaching and behaviour to bring about the improvement necessary to secure the best possible outcomes for your child.

A copy of the inspection report can be found on our website via the link below.
http://www.haaf.org.uk/Ofsted-Report2

Yours sincerely

Dr Tesca Bennett
Principal