



26<sup>th</sup> November 2014

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

## **Ofsted Survey Visit – 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

Barely six months after Ofsted's survey inspection visit to look at the School's use of alternative provision in June this year, the Head was notified on Wednesday, 19 November, that Prince Henry's had been singled out for a visit from Her Majesty's Inspector, Mrs Gwen Coates, as part of Ofsted's review of State schools' provision for the 'Most Able' students. This process is a follow-up to a landmark survey, the findings of which were published in a report in June 2013, "*The most able students – Are they doing as well as they should in our non-selective secondary schools?*".

On Thursday, 20 November, Mrs Coates spent the whole day at Prince Henry's. Apart from obviously conducting in-depth fact-finding and data-crunching interviews with the Headteacher and the School's Senior Leadership Team, she also had discussions with over a dozen Heads of Department and teachers, the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body as well as having separate meetings with two groups of students, one comprising Year 9 pupils and one Sixth Formers, with ample opportunity to review their work. Time was also found in her very tight schedule to take a tour of the school and drop in on some lessons in progress.

Mrs Coates concluded her day-long visit to the School with a debriefing session with the Head, the Senior Leadership Team and the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body. During this feedback session, she was at pains to point out that the purpose of the visit was not an 'inspection' as such. Prince Henry's had been selected as one of around 40 secondary schools throughout England to be visited as part of a survey to assess how schools round the country respond to the challenge of ensuring that their Most Able students perform and achieve to the best of their abilities and potential. The end-goal of the national survey is to collate information from all the schools visited to identify 'best practice', pinpoint what strategies and initiatives work effectively and those that might work less well, and where there might be shortcomings or areas for improvement. A report on the findings will eventually be published by Ofsted, probably at some stage in early 2015.

As the HMI's visit was not an inspection, she also made it plain during her debriefing session that she would be passing no judgement in terms of conventional Ofsted wording (i.e. 'Outstanding', 'Good', 'Requires improvement' or 'Inadequate') and that no post-visit report would be sent to the School for publication. Nevertheless, she did say that the School was at liberty to share feedback with staff, students, governors and parents. In this letter, we have, therefore, sought to summarise the key points and findings from Mrs Coates' visit to the School.

Overall, Mrs Coates commented that she was very impressed with what she had seen and learned, much of which was excellent. Although the purpose of the visit was specifically to look at provisions for the Most Able students, she recognised that many of the processes, strategies and initiatives undertaken were applicable to students across the board of abilities. Her feedback can be divided into several key areas: (1) transfer, transition & induction; (2) achievement; (3) teaching, learning and assessment; (4) curriculum; (5) support and guidance; (6) findings from a questionnaire submitted to Year 9 pupils; (7) areas for development and reflection.

1. Prince Henry's has a unique profile in this survey as the only school operating in a first/middle/secondary structure. Despite the different challenges the three-tier organisation poses, she praised the excellent links with Middle Schools, enabling Prince Henry's to identify in advance the Most Able students, particularly any who might be under-achieving. She also commended the highly aspirational ethos in the School, with staff having high expectations for not just the Most Able students, but all. The Year 9 pupils she talked to highlighted the fact that they felt their abilities were being fully and appropriately challenged from Day One at Prince Henry's. She also appreciated that one of the objectives of the strategic vision in setting up a Multi-Academy Trust was to broaden and deepen links with both Middle and First Schools so

Victoria Avenue, Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 4QH

t: 01386 765588 • f: 01386 40760 • e: [enquiries@princehenrys.worcs.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@princehenrys.worcs.sch.uk) • [www.princehenrys.worcs.sch.uk](http://www.princehenrys.worcs.sch.uk)

The Prince Henry's High School Academy Trust trading as Prince Henry's High School, registered as a company in England and Wales at the above address. Reg No 07512962

**Working in collaboration with Bredon Hill and St Ewgin's Middle Schools**



as to enhance the reliable and consistent tracking of students' achievement and progress throughout their school careers.

2. She noted that the overwhelming majority of the Most Able students make good or better than average levels of progress and attain very highly.
3. Mrs Coates felt that effective processes were in place to meet the needs and challenges of providing for the Most Able students. Both the Year 9 and Sixth Form students voiced their perception that they were being stretched, with teachers pushing them beyond what they needed purely to succeed in their exams. Lesson content, work set and the style of marking, with emphasis being placed on challenge, extension work and progress through proactive response by students to feedback from teachers, were of a very high standard.
4. The HMI formed the impression the curriculum and subject options available to the Most Able students – and, indeed, all students – matched needs. She cited as a particular strength of the School its extensive and diversified range of extra-curricular provision. She felt that, once again, whilst available to all, this provided particularly good opportunities for the Most Able and Gifted & Talented students to flourish. The importance and relevance of enrichment opportunities offered to those in Years 12 and 13 were freely recognised by the Sixth Formers interviewed by Mrs Coates. She stressed this important aspect to school life of not just providing a formal education to students, but helping to nurture well-rounded and confident individuals ready to tackle university and the rest of their lives after Prince Henry's.
5. Mrs Coates acknowledged there was plenty of timely support and guidance for students when it comes to making crucial pathway choices about GCSEs, A-Levels, universities and careers. The Most Able students are encouraged to think about opting for more challenging academic subjects and, ultimately, applying for top universities, including Oxford or Cambridge, if appropriate. She also noted, however, that personal choices made by students were duly respected. She recognised the vital guidance and support given in completing UCAS forms and personal statements.
6. Findings from a small sample questionnaire submitted by the HMI to Year 9 pupils clearly highlighted the aspiration among the Most Able students to be in the top set and to stay there, which implied working hard to do so. Mrs Coates specifically asked the students whether it was 'cool' to achieve at Prince Henry's. The responses given left her in no doubt that there was a culture of high achievement at the School, with plenty of excellent role models. The Year 9 students also reported that they knew what their targets were, and these encouraged them to work hard to attain them. Findings from the questionnaire also corroborated the HMI's own impressions about the challenges posed by work set, lessons and feedback.
7. As for those areas for further development and where progress could be made, Mrs Coates stressed that her suggestions should be seen in the perspective of the excellent overall teaching and learning environment in the School. Results being achieved and progress being made by the Most Able students are excellent. Some questionnaire responses from students cited that the students preferred being in classes that were streamed into sets as opposed to mixed ability. Mrs Coates also believed the School should set itself the target of increasing the number of students making four levels of progress across eight subjects, with an accompanying goal of diminishing any disparities between attainment and progress in individual subjects.

To conclude, it is fair to say that Her Majesty's Inspector Mrs Coates left Evesham after her extremely busy day with a highly favourable impression of Prince Henry's High School, not just as regards its provision for its Most Able students, but also for the education and opportunities offered to all of its students. This provides further corroboration and endorsement of the aspirations of the Head, the Senior Leadership Team, the staff and governors of the School to remain a genuinely comprehensive and all-inclusive school serving the community of the Vale of Evesham.

Yours sincerely

**Keith Watson**  
**Vice Chairman of Governors**