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At the start of September 2023, we were thrilled to announce that Castle House School had joined the family of The Worshipful Company of Haberdashers' to become Haberdashers' Castle House School.

In immediate and practical terms there is no change for the school. We remain independent and our ethos and direction remain as they always have been - we are non-selective and provide primary school education to boys and girls in small class sizes and with a family centred approach. The only visible changes are the signs on the school and the badges on the uniform.

In becoming Haberdashers' Castle House School, we are the nineteenth member of the Haberdashers' family of schools. As a Haberdashers' School, the opportunities for education and sharing knowledge with the other eighteen schools across the Company are immense. We also very much look forward to being able to take our children to visit Haberdashers' Hall in London so they can experience this most wonderful place.

We have always had a strong, positive relationship with Haberdashers' Adams a few hundred yards along the road. This understanding has resulted in us being able to use teaching and sporting facilities as part of their outreach programme. This has been of direct benefit to our pupils who gain from both the use of the outstanding facilities and the experience of what it is like to walk into a larger secondary school. The relationship has also worked both ways with senior pupils from Adams developing their leadership potential through mentoring activities with our pupils.

Such positive news, however, must also come with a slight caveat. I must be clear from the outset that being 'Haberdashers' Castle House School' does not provide any admissions advantage to our children to Haberdashers' Adams. We were already one of the named schools on the designated list for oversubscription of day places and we will continue to be treated the same as other schools on the designated list.

As a Haberdashers' School we are proud to be part of an organisation which such an illustrious past. The Haberdashers' Company was founded in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and for as long as we have worn clothes, these have adorned their garments with haberdashery. Hats and caps have been embellished with ribbons and buckles, broaches and pins.

The Haberdashers' Company has its roots in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when two distinct branches of the trade of haberdashery existed. One dedicated to St Catherine, the other St Nicholas. One branch of the trade was carried on by the Haberdashers of hats, the other branch of the trade was composed of the haberdashers of small wares, they were known Millianers or Milliners because the bulk of their goods were imported from Milan in Italy.

The fine leathers produced in Italy, for example, made beautiful gloves and purses that were coveted by wealthy Londoners and imported aboard ships sailing out of the Mediterranean.

The first charter of the Haberdashers' Company was granted by King Henry VI in 1448. This charter authorised and empowered the liegemen of the mystery of Haberdashers to erect and found a guild in honour of St Catherine. As time progressed the various branches were amalgamated and in the reign of King Henry VII a charter was produced in which it was declared they should be one craft by the name of the Merchant Haberdashers.

So, in Medieval times, what might you have seen for sale, whilst strolling down Cheapside in London? The stalls, set out on the sides of the thoroughfare would have been overflowing with goods of the Mercers, linen cloths, fustians, satins, jewels, wood, oil, wine, salt and much else besides. But scattered in amongst them were the stalls of the Haberdashers, filling the gaps, offering commodities the Mercers did not sell. Laces of coloured leather, brightly coloured tempting ribbons, caps of all hues and sizes and many other small articles of dress. Small pieces to brighten the day.

The company was at its height in the Tudor period. During the coronation of Anne Boleyn the City of London went wild, creating a series of magnificent pageants in the streets and upon the River Thames. The people of London were decked in their finery and the Haberdashers goods brightened and lifted everyone's dress. Even the poor might find a small piece of ribbon to adorn their hair. The Lord Mayor of the time was a member of the Haberdashers Company and their barge, with its figurehead of St Catherine, would have been as majestic as any in the river pageant that day.

Queen Elizabeth I, perhaps not surprisingly, given her love of ornamentation on her dress, favoured the company by granting them a charter, establishing all their privileges and allowed them to have a hall within the City. By degrees the trade of haberdashery became interwoven with other trades such as drapers and hosiers and the business became less distinct.

Step forward another century or so and by the Stuart period the range of goods had expanded hugely, gloves, daggers, swords, inkhorns, silver toothpicks and buttons. All a person needed to stand out from the crowd, to be able to say "Look! I am a person with money enough to waste on frivolity". An essential item for haberdashers to sell were pins, pins made all the difference to tailoring but that is another thing altogether.

In 1666, great fire of London destroyed their hall and all their records, their long history was lost and new codes were drawn up in 1675, which are those by which they are now governed. The loss of their hall, built on a site bequeathed to them in 1478, meant a new hall had to be erected. Sir Christopher Wren was employed, and the new hall stood until 1840 when another fire destroyed all but the court- room and drawing room.

The hall was re-built in 1864 and filled with paintings and treasures, part of the wonderful collection of the Haberdashers' Company. The Company have always promoted education and established schools during the 17th century. Among the schools was a school and almshouses founded by Robert Aske in 1692. The school was for twenty poor boys, sons of the freemen of the Company and accommodation for twenty poor men. Robert Aske was a great benefactor of the Haberdashers and left money which allowed

the school to enlarge, it took boys and girls. The school continues to this day and has been hugely successful.

In modern days The Haberdashers' Company is one of the Great Twelve Livery Companies and has a long history closely connected to the development of the City of London. Today, the Company is in the privileged position, thanks to benefactors both past and present, to continue with its educational and other charitable activities.

Education is of prime importance to The Haberdashers' Company and includes schools of all types and sizes within our family of schools - whether a brand new, state academy or centuries' old independent institution, like Haberdashers' Monmouth, founded in 1614. There were eighteen schools, in four devolved groups - Haberdashers' Academy Trust South, Haberdashers' West Midlands Academy Trust, Haberdashers' Elstree Schools and Haberdashers' Monmouth Schools. Haberdashers' Castle House School is now the nineteenth school.

The Company, as Trustee of the various educational charities that support the schools, is responsible for ensuring that the revenues are spent properly and that building projects are good value for money. The Company's Education Committee maintains close links with the schools and is kept advised of broad educational issues and initiatives. Haberdashers' support, challenge and professional expertise is a constant resource for our schools. A high proportion of governors are Haberdashers - many of whom have supported various school groups at different times and are widely experienced. Some Trust Boards, Local Governing Bodies and school boards often include Heads from other schools within the Haberdashers' family. Trust CEOs, Headmasters, Headmistresses, Executive Principals or Principals are appointed by their relevant governing bodies and all other staff are appointed by schools directly. The day to day running of the schools is the responsibility of the school's executive leader under the direction of their respective governing body.

The Company takes great interest in its schools. The Haberdashers' Advantage programme provides a range of initiatives for students in the areas of cultural enrichment, character education and careers as well as professional collaboration for school leaders. A deputation from the Company (a group of representatives, drawn from the Master and Wardens, Liverymen, Freemen and Company Staff) visits the schools each year.

Ian Sterling

**Headteacher**

**Haberdashers Castle House School Trust**