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“Valuing every achievement”

Friday 22nd September 2023

Dear Families

It is with relief that I can now update you with our Ofsted Inspections after 7 and a half months of not being able to do so.

These past months have been the most difficult in my career, and also for our whole School team.

We had our first Inspection in February. This was carried out by two Secondary mainstream Inspectors and a SEND Inspector (who was here for only 1 out of the 2 days). This inspection was unpleasant and unfair and this was picked up by not only us as Senior Leaders, but also by our staff, and unfortunately our pupils. At the feedback at the end of this inspection we were given one set of grades. We heavily disputed the lower grades given. Due to this feedback, the process, conduct of the Inspectors, and the grades, we instigated the Ofsted Complaints Procedure. In the interim, we were then given another set of grades on the 6th March, which lowered another area grading, and then again on the 8th March, we were faced with another set of grades. As you can imagine, this was beyond stressful to have happen and there was a point where I didn't know whether to laugh or cry, as the whole process and system was farcical.

We successfully got to Step 2 of the Complaints Procedure (which only a small percentage of Schools do) where our complaint was upheld. We received an apology for this initial inspection from Ofsted's Regional Assistant Director, whose opening words were 'we didn't do a very good job with you did we' and we were subsequently given a re-inspection. This February inspection, the process and outcomes, were considered flawed and deemed inaccurate and incomplete. We were extremely grateful to have received this honest response and outcome.

I received this information on June 14th (4 months since the first inspection) that we would have a 'Gathering Additional Evidence' visit on the 21st June. That following week I was in and out of meetings with the Lead Inspector and these seemed very positive where we felt that we would



genuinely get the opportunity to show this Inspection team how the initial inspection had been flawed in their inaccurate and incomplete evidence base. It was only at 8.00am on the morning of the 'Gathering Additional Evidence' Inspection that it was said to me that Quality of Education would not be looked at. In an Ofsted Inspection, whatever your grade for Quality of Education stands at, is what your 'overall effectiveness' is, so therefore, at the end of this Inspection activity, we would still not be deemed a 'good' School. This was extremely upsetting for me as I had a School worth of staff ready to give more than their usual 100% that day, with the knowledge that whatever they did, it wouldn't change the overall grade. This was again, deeply upsetting and stressful. I want to apologise for not being able to 'hold it together' that day as I did burst into tears welcoming the children into School due to this information. I also couldn't share this with my staff as it would have upset them too. Quite a burden to have to hold to yourself when you know everyone is going above and beyond.

We got through this 'Gathering Additional Evidence' Inspection and had achieved 'good' grades in all areas except for Quality of Education (as they had no intention of changing this) and then Early Years??? As all of you know, our Early Years is the strongest department in the School with high levels of progress data. We have had validation of this by external reviewers who are School Improvement Advisors or Ofsted Inspectors. We heavily disputed these gradings, and the process whereby we were not able to challenge the Quality of Education grading and initiated the Ofsted Complaints Procedure for the second time.

We are now at Step 3 with this Complaints Procedure as we have not yet been given accurate or satisfactory evidence to suggest why we are 'Requires Improvement' in Quality of Education and Early Years. We are lacking clarity, evidence and rationale for these final two decisions. We challenged the rest and had them uplifted proving we know how to self-evaluate our provision, and also how flawed and inaccurate February's Inspection had been.

Ofsted will publish the report today, Friday 22nd September, on their website. If I am honest, apart from to support our complaint, I find it difficult to pay any regard to this report as it contains too much content from the February report that was deemed inaccurate, incomplete and flawed. However, you will see from reading the report, there are a lot of positives in it.

In the past 7 months, your child has still received a 'good' education in every department in this School. In the past 7 months, your child has still been learning, making progress, and achieving, whether in their curriculum or externally through exam and accreditation results. In the past 7 months, your child will not have known the nightmare situation we have been in. This will continue moving forwards.

We have been very well supported by our wider community; our Governors, School Improvement Advisors, our legal team and also our local MP Sajid Javid who have all helped us in our fight to challenge this.

We are still within the Complaints Procedure so this is not over yet and I will not stop fighting, along with my team, until we have done everything possible to get these last two 'inaccurate and incomplete' gradings changed. If we don't manage this, I need you all to know that we tried. That this is not a Requires Improvement provision, and as leaders we will continue to ensure that



Teaching and Learning across the whole School remains good. Logic would suggest, if our Post 16 provision is 'good' and our outcomes element within Personal Development is 'good' that this doesn't just happen at the end of a child's School life, it must be 'good' leading up to this.

There was an overwhelmingly positive response from both parents, carers and staff from the surveys, which was verbally commented on but never made it to the report. So, thank you so much to you all for your input.

I would like to put on record my thanks and gratitude to all the School staff and our Governors for supporting the decision to fight this and to allow me to put them through two inspections this year. This is a very stressful process for all involved and so their willingness to go through this again is a credit to them and also a measure of how we all felt as a School, that we were strongly let down by Ofsted and that we are the 'good' School we have always been.

I appreciate that there will be mixed emotions and feelings around this. Please can I kindly ask that you consider the stress that is still very much a part of my, and my teams' day, and that if you would like to comment or ask questions, please do so to me and not on social media.

Not at all the letter I wanted to be sharing with you. I will update you on the conclusion of the Step 3 Complaint when we receive it.

In the meantime, please can I assure you this is a 'good' School and that I hope you can see from the above content, we feel we haven't received a fair or accurate inspection, due to contradictions and the variability of the Inspectors and their opinions.

Thank you so much for your continued support.



Tracey

