

21st October 2019

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: Ofsted Report

Please find attached the report following the recent Ofsted visit to the school on 26th and 27th September 2019.

Due to Ofsted reports being limited to 1500 words, I thought it would be helpful for me to provide additional context, including some verbal feedback given by the inspectors that are not included in the report.

As part of their work, the inspectors review a wide range of documentation including the School Development Plan (our objectives for 2019/20 and our own evaluation of what we do well and what we need to improve. Alongside the new Ofsted framework, these key documents form the foundations of the inspection.

Ofsted recognised the hard work that had led to the improvements since our 2017 inspection. In addition they recognised that we had already identified and begun work on key areas such as developing the subject knowledge of staff through our CPD programme and the importance of developing a curriculum that is focussed on the skills that are needed in adult life. These areas are ongoing developments which began in the summer term. These were already two of the three key areas for development in our school development plan for 2019/20 with support from the Hertfordshire Numeracy team being in place since April 2019.

In the new Ofsted framework, the inspection is divided into the following judgement areas:

- Overall Effectiveness
- Quality of Education
- Behaviour
- Personal Development
- Leadership and Management

When they fed back to us on **Quality of Education** inspectors were keen to draw out a large number of positives that are not fully reflected in the report. In order to arrive at this judgement, inspectors observed lessons, spoke with senior and middle leaders, class teachers and students about the learning that takes place in the school.



- Clear intent expressed by senior leaders and middle leaders regarding what the overarching purpose of the Pinewood Curriculum is
- Students enjoyed their learning
- Assessment was used effectively with teachers seen to be using assessment
 - to plan lessons
 - to move students forward in their learning
- Teaching Assistants were mostly used effectively in lessons seen
- Subject knowledge was relatively good across the sample of lessons seen
- The school is considering other options for accreditation

In English and Literacy

- There are well-planned schemes of work
- They observed an increased use of reading for development of independence
- The inspectors saw evidence of use of reading to develop independence
- There is clear evidence of Integrated Visual Coding used in lessons
- The introduction of the new *Short Reads* reading cards good for developing comprehension skills
- There was some evidence of cross-curricular English e.g. interview practice in WRL

In Numeracy

- Numeracy is developing a stepped approach to the curriculum
- They observed emerging evidence of memory skills being taught
- Cross curricular links were evident particularly in
 - Pathways Enterprise (Tuck shop)
 - PE
 - Cooking
 - Science

In Physical Education

- The inspectors observed the implementation of clear routines and attention to safety
- The advocacy of pupil leadership
- There were strong cross curricular links
 - Effect of PE on the body – science
 - Measurement

In addition to these, and the comments made in the report itself, the inspectors felt that lessons could be further improved by focusing more on practical learning and less on worksheets and written work.

Inspectors were particularly impressed by the **Behaviour** of our students. Particular strengths were the:

- Positive atmosphere and culture
- The fact that off-task behaviour where present was corrected ‘seamlessly’
- It was clear from observation and discussion with the students that they enjoy their learning
- There is a culture of encouragement across the school

As part of coming to their judgement on **Personal Development**, inspectors praised the fact that:

- Our curriculum extends beyond the academic
- Links to EHCPs are really clear
- Lots of evidence of Social Moral Spiritual and Cultural education threaded through the school
- Student’s personal Development strongly underpinned by curriculum

A particular strength of **Leadership and Management** of the school that the inspectors referred to on several occasions during the inspection was the honesty and accuracy of our own assessment of the school’s strengths and areas for improvement. They were keen to stress how well we know our own school.

In addition, they told us that:

- There is a good range of Continuing Professional Development and training available for staff within the school
- Our middle leader structure very positive feature of the school
- Our staff were overwhelmingly positive in their questionnaire
- The parent Questionnaire was also positive

Inspectors felt that the school is very much on the cusp of good. Whilst it is clearly disappointing that the final judgement fell the wrong side of the line and that the report focusses on the negative aspects of the inspection findings, Inspectors were keen for us to request a reinspection of the school as soon as we know we are good. They expressed confidence in our judgement and our ability to judge the school. To feel in control of the Ofsted process is a very good place to be. Despite the judgement remaining at Requires Improvement, Inspectors felt that the changes since the last inspection were significant and that the school had moved a very long way. Staff have worked very hard to get us to where we are and I remain very proud of our significant achievements over the last two years.

Yours sincerely,

D. McGachen
Headteacher

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