



St. Gabriel's C. E. Primary School

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St Gabriel's, Blackburn
Deepening Discipleship

Headteacher:
Mrs B Haigh

Chair of Governors:
Mr N Reeve

"Stand firm... be courageous" 1 Corinthians 16:13

6th June 2024

Dear Parents,

Please find attached school's Ofsted inspection report from 24-25th April 2024.

You are, no doubt, asking: 'Why the change in overall judgement from 'Outstanding' to 'Good', what does this mean?'

I feel I must begin by providing a little context. You may be aware of recent reports in the media calling for a change to Ofsted's use of 'single word' inspection judgements such as Outstanding or Good. Those calling for change make the point that these descriptions are far too simple and give the impression that schools fit neatly into a hierarchy of strict categories, when in reality they don't. In truth, there can be significant crossover which is open to personal opinion and viewpoint. As a school, we share this call for change.

Whether we consider the single word judgements to be right or wrong, we would be hard pressed not to feel some level of disappointment that we did not obtain 'Outstanding'. The measure was there and we were deemed not to achieve it, on the day, by the smallest margin. This is inevitably disappointing. Nevertheless, the written report goes a long way to capture school's character and exceptional strengths and we are delighted that the Early Years (Reception) was fully recognised as being outstanding. There are, however, some aspects of the report – our areas for improvement, which could benefit from being more fully explained. But firstly, it may be helpful to provide you with a brief outline of how the inspection process works.

An Ofsted inspection follows a very narrow focus. All schools are required to be reviewed in the same areas: early reading/phonics, the Early Years and (more recently) maths. This is why Reception alone is specifically mentioned in the report and other classes are not. Beyond these three areas, the inspection team can then choose one or two other curriculum subjects to look at more fully. In our case they chose only History. Other subjects weren't looked at or discussed with staff or children in any depth. It may also be of interest to parents that the current inspection framework does not include reviews into English at any level – lessons, children's work, curriculum or conversations with leaders.

Ofsted reports all follow the same format – with a descriptive narrative and identified areas for improvement.

Our report refers to "one or two subjects" in which children have less secure knowledge. Ofsted is not permitted to name specific curriculum areas in their report, but as parents you must be asking which subjects these are. The answer is French and Music. Leaders were informed that the children questioned were unable to use conversational "language that prepared them for holidays

in France". Nor were they able to list the instruments "likely to be used in the creation of jazz music". These skills and abilities could be seen as a big ask in a primary setting so, to some extent, these apparent shortfalls come as no surprise. Whilst our curriculum is carefully designed to provide the required breadth and balance, we have also ensured it has the capacity to deliver additional support in key areas of learning. This is essential to support the wider needs of all our children. As such, our time-pressured timetable is inevitably going to favour some subjects over others - French and Music have a reduced 'weighting' in our curriculum design. Nevertheless, we are already looking at ways to enhance both these areas in the future.

This is an example of the narrow margin by which we were measured to be less than outstanding. It's a little bit like highlighting the smudge in the bottom corner of an otherwise fabulous painting. The smudge might be visible but a sense of proportion is lost and the true vibrancy and detail of the painting is somewhat overlooked.

Our second area for improvement, according to the report, relates to the attendance of a very small minority of children. This is in direct response to the current national agenda. You will be aware of school's existing focus on attendance and lateness – whether positively or negatively! However, you will shortly be receiving more information regarding the DfE's new national attendance policy, due to start in September 2024 which includes increased absence fine rates, new thresholds at which penalties must be considered and requirements for schools to share daily attendance data with the government. It is no surprise, therefore, that attendance featured in our report. We will be looking to work closely with the minority of parents for whom pupil absence falls below 90%. Critical to this, is the need for parents to work more fully in partnership with school.

So, as parents, please continue to support the hard working and dedicated staff of our school with the full assurance that a change to our Ofsted grade does not change the high quality of education and care that you have come to know and expect from St Gabriel's.

On behalf of the staff and Governors, I want to thank you for the fabulous comments of support received from the Parent View survey and your conversations with the inspector on the yard. Clearly, we are all very proud of our school!

And so, we will move forward together, albeit without an 'Outstanding' logo on our website. We will also be looking on with eagerness to see how the Ofsted process will, no doubt, change and improve in the future. Four years till the next one!

Thank you,

Mrs B Haigh
Headteacher

Mr N Reeve
Chair of Governors