

December 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian

It has been a long term and we are all looking forward to the festive break and to 2019. As you are aware, our school was inspected by Ofsted earlier this term and the full report has now been made public, a link for which is on our website. The headline judgement shows that the school, which was previously judged as 'Good' in the May 2015 inspection now 'Requires Improvement'. When you read the report, please can I encourage you to read the full text beyond the headline judgement.

As you read the full report you will find that inspectors saw that we were already aware of the areas for improvement and already have action plans in place which will be reviewed and strengthened in response to this. A number of the comments in the report raise the need for greater consistency. This is because many of the findings had already been identified by the school and improvements were already evident to the Ofsted team which need to be built on and given time to embed. The Ofsted team are confident in the ability of the leadership of the school to bring about further significant improvements in order to provide the best educational experience that we can.

The high regard in which our school is held came through very strongly in Ofsted Parent View. I would like to thank over 230 parents who completed the online survey which is an extremely high response rate for schools. 95% of parents report that their child is happy or very happy in school, 93% that they are making good progress at school, 94% that they are well taught, 92% that the school is well led and managed and that 95% would recommend the school to other parents. Compared to other schools nationally, these figures are impressively high and show how much parents value the work that we do.

The report identified many strengths in the school, for example:

- The headteacher has established a secure senior leadership team over the past two years and it is having a positive effect on improving the school.
- Senior leaders have been successful in stopping a decline in pupil outcomes and taken strong action to improve the quality of teaching and other aspects of the school.
- Leadership is exhibiting clear capacity to improve the school further.
- Governors are ambitious for pupils and know the school well
- Reading is promoted well by the school.
- In 2018, pupils' progress, including progress for disadvantaged pupils, improved quickly in a range of subjects.
- Current pupils' work shows progress is improving across a range of subjects

It gives many positives about our pupils and how they behave in and out of lessons:

- Most pupils are confident, well-mannered and are very positive about the school.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well, as is democracy.
- The school is a calm and orderly place to be.
- There are well-organised systems and routines that pupils understand clearly.
- Pupils say 'staff are kind'.
- There are good systems in place to support and help pupils' emotional well-being.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is broadly in average overall.
- The schools' new behaviour system focuses well on using rewards to support positive behaviour.
- Pupils conduct themselves well throughout the day and do what is expected of them. They socialise well together at break time and lunchtime.

In the Sixth Form:

- There is some very effective teaching in the sixth form where students benefit from teachers' strong subject knowledge, high expectations and skilful questioning.

- Students benefit very well from work experience and a wide range of enrichment opportunities in school and in the local community.
- Students are very positive about their experiences in the sixth form.

We know that things have improved and we are determined to continue to make Longbenton the best school that it can be for our fantastic pupils and our local community. The report identifies areas for us to focus on:

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, to enable all groups of pupils to achieve well
- Improve students' progress in the sixth form so it is consistently good across courses.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare to be at least good
- Improve the impact of leaders, managers and governors

Our own self-evaluation and school development plans highlight precisely the areas highlighted by the inspection; there have been no surprises in that regard.

We all want to see our school improving and to achieve this we need to strengthen the partnership between school, parents and the young person. We all need to expect more of each other and that includes the teachers in school expecting more from pupils in terms of engagement in lessons and greater pride in the presentation of work in books. Teachers will be challenging pupils more in lessons and with homework and they need to see a positive response by engaging more and being less passive in learning.

Early in the New Year, I will write to you again to give details of a Parents' Forum event at which I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Uniform and dress code reminder

As the end of this year approaches, I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of our uniform and dress code requirements in advance of the holidays in case anyone is buying uniform for their child. I would like to thank parents and pupils for their support on this and take the opportunity to remind parents of our expectations. Our full uniform policy can be found on our website and we expect all pupils to be wearing their blazer and tie as they enter the building. Tightly fitting trousers, jeans, leggings or tracksuit bottoms are not allowed and pupils should wear plain black shoes, not trainers.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your continued support of the school and wish you a Merry Christmas. We look forward to welcoming the students back to school on Monday 7 January 2019.

Yours faithfully



Mr P Quinn
Headteacher