



17th January 2018

Ref: MSU/pab

Dear Parents/Carers

Re: Ofsted report

Please find enclosed a copy of the latest Ofsted report following the inspection which took place on 6 and 7 December 2017. As I said in the final newsletter of last term, we feel it was a fair inspection resulting in a fair outcome. That outcome is that Forest Hill School is not yet good. It is testament to the skills of the inspectors that they were able, in a relatively short time, to recognise the many things which make us proud of Forest Hill, as well as identifying accurately the things we need to improve. Some of the strengths identified by the inspection team are:

- Robust procedures to promote pupils' personal development and welfare
- Leaders and governors taking bold decisions to improve school organisation and routines leaving it well placed to move forward
- Strong leadership of the sixth form leading to good provision and opportunities for students
- Examples of good teaching leading to good progress of pupils

It would be an entirely reasonable question to ask why I write in positive terms when the overall judgement has moved from good to requires improvement since the previous inspection. In part, the answer to that question relates to the fact that a new, more rigorous Ofsted framework has been put into place since our last inspection in 2013. This has moved the goalposts considerably, with the intention of making it far harder to gain the top grades. My own thoughts are that this is the right thing to do. Schools need to be challenged and it is quite right that the standards demanded from us are as high as they can be.

Additionally, the last 18 months have been the most challenging in the school's history, with the 2016-17 academic year severely affected by destabilising financial issues, staff restructuring and much lost learning time due to industrial action. These factors have clearly had a significant impact on the progress of the school. Our performance in the recently revised school accountability measures in 2016 and 2017 was below where we would like it to be and we had already put in place strategies to address this before the inspection team arrived. Their summary of the areas in which we need to improve underlines our own prior evaluation, a fact which is acknowledged in the report.

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The report highlights the key strengths of the school in pupils' personal development and welfare, sixth form provision and the decisions taken by leaders and governors to address existing identified weaknesses. The latter point is particularly encouraging and is returned to repeatedly in the report. The inspection team were keen to acknowledge that our accurate self-evaluation has led to bold and difficult decisions being taken in order to secure rapid and sustained improvement for the school. This validates the strategies we have in place and gives support to the assertion that Forest Hill is on the right trajectory. This element of the report gives us confidence that the issues of consistency in teaching and in learning behaviours will be quickly improved to have an impact on further raising standards. Indeed, inspectors highlight the fact that current progress of pupils, and predictions for GCSE outcomes this year, are much improved.

I realise that sometimes reading reports such as these can be hard going but nevertheless I would encourage you to look beyond the overall judgement and read the report in its entirety. It is very honest and accurate in its assessment of the school and paints an optimistic picture for the future. After our recent difficulties, this represents a new chapter in the school's improvement journey and I am eager to ensure it is a positive one. As a staff, we have already begun to work together on our response to the report's recommendations in order to rapidly secure and sustain improved outcomes for all pupils.

As ever, your continuing support is highly valued and I would like to thank all parents who took the time to complete the Parent View survey as part of the inspection. The participation was very high and the comments overwhelmingly positive.

'Aspiring to excellence together' is certainly a very appropriate summary of the next stage of our journey.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M J Sullivan', with a wavy underline.

Mike Sullivan
Headteacher