

29th March 19

Dear Parent/Carer,

As you know, Tanfield School was inspected by Ofsted on 5th and 6th February 2019. The report and feedback were confidential until publication but we can now share it with you. It is available to be viewed on the school website and the Ofsted website from Friday 29th March, but we would like to draw your attention to a few key aspects of it.

Background

Our inspection involved four inspectors on the first day and three on the second day. This team gathered a lot of evidence, and they recognised our strengths and the significant improvements over the past eighteen months. However, the focus on student outcomes across all subjects and for all learners is the most significant part of the process. The outcomes at GCSE for the last two years have been significantly below the national average and this has led to the judgement given. There are a number of reasons that have led to these results that the leadership team is aware of and are acting on. It is important to emphasise that the report recognises that the actions we are taking are the right ones for the school and the community, but that they have not yet had time to impact on outcomes.

There were many strengths outlined in the content of the report, as follows.

Report Findings

Summary of key strengths:

"In the 18 months since his arrival, the headteacher has taken effective action to improve teaching and leadership."

The headteacher "has a clear vision for improvement that is influencing positive changes in the learning culture."

"Leaders are introducing new routines to improve behaviour and standards of teaching. Classroom environments are becoming more purposeful".

"The new deputy headteacher has worked closely with year managers to improve behaviour and welfare. The last term has seen a marked improvement in attendance and a significant reduction in fixed-term exclusions."

"Leaders are developing a curriculum to better meet the needs of all pupils, building knowledge, skills and understanding to support their aspirations, progress and personal development."

Leadership and management:

"the school's capacity for improvement is increasing."

"Year managers are working with senior leaders to address the welfare needs of individual pupils more effectively."

"The headteacher is building stronger links with the local community and local primary schools. Increasing numbers of parents are putting their faith in the school, with substantial increases in pupil numbers in Years 7 and 8."

"The headteacher is building a more aspirational culture. He and his team want the best for pupils. They are developing a broad and balanced curriculum that is meeting pupils' needs more effectively. Many of the previous gaps in the curriculum are now being filled."

"Leaders have clear plans to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development."

"Governors have developed effective systems to check school performance."

"Governors know their school and their community well. Many are parents with children at the school. They share the headteacher's ethos of high aspiration which they believe is gaining traction in the local community, as reflected in the significant increase in pupil numbers in Year 7 and 8."

"The arrangements for safeguarding are effective."

"The deputy headteacher and year managers keep a watchful eye on the welfare of pupils. Leaders pursue any concerns over pupils' welfare swiftly and follow these through to ensure that pupils are safe. Leaders document any concerns in a detailed and timely manner."

"Leaders modify teaching and welfare programmes to meet pupils' needs. They have worked with the police to make pupils aware of the dangers of harassment and cyberbullying. Additional work has been carried out to raise pupils' awareness of the hazards posed by knife crime."

"Leaders have introduced changes which are improving behaviour"

Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:

"The headteacher has introduced new strategies to encourage more purposeful reading in class. This is leading to a sharper focus on reading and is encouraging orderly classroom conduct."

"Leaders are developing pupils' knowledge of key words and vocabulary. In morning and lunchtime meetings, the headteacher and senior teachers show pupils how to build their knowledge of key words and concepts and how to revise for examinations effectively. These initiatives are beginning to make a difference"

"Teachers are beginning to use whole-school approaches to maintain a better focus on learning."

Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare:

"Leaders are doing much to raise pupils' self-esteem and aspirations".

"New initiatives are beginning to develop a more positive learning culture".

"Leaders promote messages about the effect of bullying on pupils' welfare. They have worked with the police to raise pupils' awareness of the negative effects of cyberbullying and the harassment this can cause. Leaders and year managers review incidents of bullying in their morning meetings."

"The deputy headteacher and year managers are particularly mindful of the needs of vulnerable pupils. They track the welfare of these pupils closely and work with external partners to provide additional support. Leaders have clear systems in place to check the progress and attendance of pupils at alternative provision. They take practical action to provide support for disadvantaged pupils."

"Senior and middle leaders have worked with pupils and parents to improve behaviour. They have introduced strategies to promote positive and pre-emptive action to resolve behaviour incidents before they escalate."

Outcomes for Pupils:

"actions are securing improving progress".

"The proportion of Year 11 pupils entering education, employment and training has been in line with that seen nationally."

Overall School Response

The issues that have been identified match our own identified areas and leaders are already working on refined action plans that will accelerate our progress further. All staff are working tirelessly to address areas for development rapidly. Please trust us in our efforts to do this. Tanfield School cares deeply about its learners and their families and we want the very best for all members of our community.

I know that some of you may be concerned by some parts of the report. If you are, then please don't hesitate to get in touch with me, as you are welcome to visit the school at any time to see our school in action. Finally, you have my word that I will not stop until all of the actions that have been implemented since my arrival are consistently applied in every classroom, every lesson, of every day because the students of Tanfield School deserve the very best.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Steven Clough
Headteacher