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TRIANGLE C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL

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“Learning, Excellence, Respect”

Headteacher: G Davies BEd (Hons).

11th January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Please find enclosed with this letter the school's report following our recent Ofsted Inspection.

You will see from the opening page that the overall judgement for the school is 'Requires Improvement'. As I am sure you will understand, this judgement is a surprising and disappointing one for us all.

We were obviously hopeful that our inspection result would have been more glowing, after the past twenty-two months and all the struggles we've had as a school family.

Let me be clear from the outset. I am NOT – and would never use Covid as an excuse for anything we need to improve on as a school - BUT I am sure you will appreciate there are some things that we simply have been unable to do over the last twenty-two months, whilst doing our utmost to keep school open, children educated and all stakeholders as safe as possible. Unfortunately, this wasn't something the inspectors would take into account when they visited our school. I know that this approach is happening in schools all over England, as the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) wrote recently saying:

“At the heart of the issue is Ofsted's apparent determination to go back to 'business as usual', best exemplified through its return to routine inspections. We have also heard too many reports of inspection teams not properly taking into account the very significant and ongoing impact of the pandemic on schools.”

The NAHT have been meeting with Ofsted in an attempt to get them to change this approach.

It can be hard to read criticisms of our school, although the areas for improvement in the report such as 'curriculum design' and 'phonics' are already on our school's action planning for this year.

I'd like to take this opportunity to give you a bit of background to this and show you some of the work we already have in hand.

In September 2021 the DfE decreed that by March 2022 at the latest all schools should be using only Phonics Teaching Schemes produced by a certain number of companies that the DfE had “accredited”. Many schools who knew Ofsted were due, panicked and jumped onto the first few schemes that were approved by commercial providers. **We did not do this.** What we have been doing is working to evaluate the different accredited schemes to see which one would work best for OUR children. All outcomes for our school in reading and phonics indicate that the vast majority of our children reach the expected standards – putting us well above national averages. Most recently, as I informed you on a newsletter, over 93% of our Year 2 children 'passed' a standardised phonics assessment, compared to less than 80% nationally. In other words, because our results told us we could, we have taken a thoughtful, measured approach to changing the scheme we use to teach phonics, to ensure that it was the best one for our children and would enhance something we already felt we did well.

To add a little more context to this, the inspection's criticism of the way we teach phonics is also founded on a small evidence base. They listened to two Year 1 and two Year 2 children read, choosing lower ability ones from both classes. They dipped into a phonics lesson in our 3 infant classrooms, but as their timetabling had slipped, they only saw the very ends of these sessions as children moved from phonics onto something else. They also observed part of a phonics intervention activity.

Moving forward, we will decide on the new phonics scheme this term, before making sure staff receive training and we have all the resources we need to implement it. We will of course keep you fully informed about the changes when we make them.

I was also disappointed by their criticisms of our curriculum, especially the 'sweeping statement' that implies children 'find it hard to remember what they have been taught'. I feel that this statement should be put into some context too as you read it. The evidence to support this statement is actually very small. It is based, as far as we can tell, on a very brief conversation with a small group of children.

Of course, pupils' recall of facts is important and we'll be working hard to make sure our curriculum is as joined up as possible and that each stage really builds on the next. We have already begun to investigate ways in which we can do this.

So, before I move on from the areas for development let me stress again absolutely that I am not making any excuses at all, but sometimes a little bit of context goes a long way to understanding a starkly written report. The whole team here have taken the criticisms very personally – as I know you know, we all love being part of the Triangle 'family', working with your children and always strive to be the best school we can be. Over the coming months, we'll be working really hard to address the points Ofsted made, as well as continuing to focus on ensuring every child in the school's education and wellbeing is caught up whilst the pandemic goes on.

As a document, the report is actually largely positive, with lots to celebrate. Please allow me to pick out some of my favourite quotes for you:

'Triangle Primary is a happy and harmonious school where pupils like to attend.'

'Leaders develop a culture where pupils feel safe and cared for.'

'Pupils feel that everyone treats each other with respect.'

'Parents value the support from the school. They feel that 'all the staff know every pupil and it feels like a close-knit team'.'

'Leaders seek the views of pupils and respond to them to support a love of reading.'

'Children in Reception learn in a warm, caring and friendly environment.'

'Pupils have a positive attitude to learning.'

'The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.'

There are many more. Plenty of reasons there then to be cheerful and celebrate. The positive elements of the report are testament to the dedication and hard work of all my colleagues, the Governing Body, the children themselves and of course you, the parents who work so hard supporting their learning at home (more so than ever in this recent period).

Rest assured; we will work extremely hard on the areas Ofsted have identified to ensure their judgement of us is more positive next time. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Kind regards,

Gavin Davies