

Date: 18|01|2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

OFSTED Inspection

Following our OFSTED inspection last term – our first since we became an all-through academy - I am writing to share the outcomes with you.

I am pleased to say that inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of our school as 'Good', with key areas 'Outstanding':

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected

This inspection was carried out under a new framework very different to that used for our last full inspection in 2013. Whilst the previous judgement was 'Outstanding' in all areas, OFSTED's own national director of education has said of the new framework that if "a school that has been judged 'Outstanding' a good many years ago is inspected again and judged to be 'Good'...that doesn't mean that the school has declined in recent years, in fact the opposite can be the case."

We know that this is true of Sydney Russell – we have undoubtedly continued to improve year-on-year since our previous inspection.

I am therefore delighted that the report fully recognises the incredible strengths of our school.

In **Behaviour and Attitudes** the inspectors judged our school to be 'Outstanding'. They found that:

- Leaders expect pupils to behave well. They have created systems that teachers use consistently and that pupils understand. Pupils are respectful of each other and to adults.
- Leaders celebrate diversity and equality, and pupils feel included in the school community. Staff encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour. This leads to a calm environment throughout the school.
- Bullying is not tolerated here. Pupils told inspectors that this is a school where it is safe to be you, whoever you are. If pupils have concerns, they know who to report them to. Staff resolve any issues effectively and pupils value this.
- Leaders have made sure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe in school, in the community and online. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe.
- Leaders and teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. From reception class through to Year 13, staff and pupils know the system of rewards and sanctions. As a result, pupils manage their own

behaviour extremely well. There is very little low-level disruption in lessons. Pupils learn without distraction. When they are not in lessons, pupils are polite and respectful to each other and staff.

- The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well met. Leaders know their pupils well and are ambitious for them individually. Pupils' needs are identified quickly. Teachers receive the information they need to support pupils learn well. This is also the case for pupils who attend the additional resource provision.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They know about the dangers that are most likely to affect pupils in and outside school. Staff know how to report their concerns. Leaders keep accurate records of all reported incidents. Leaders use external agencies, when necessary, to get the support that pupils may need. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and they know how to report a concern.

In **Personal Development**, the inspectors judged our school to be 'Outstanding'. They found that:

- The personal development programme is ambitious and exceptionally well planned. Through the programme's five pillars, pupils take part in high-quality experiences in the arts, sport, careers, global citizenship and adventure. These are very popular with the pupils and participation rates are high. Leaders check which pupils take part in extra-curricular activities. They make sure that all pupil groups take advantage of the opportunities on offer.
- Pupils learn about life in modern Britain and being part of a diverse society. An ethos of equality runs through the whole school. There are well-planned opportunities for pupils to debate and elect peers to leadership roles.
- The careers programme supports pupils well with their choices after GCSE examinations. Pupils receive impartial guidance on progression to the school's sixth form or to other schools and colleges. This includes information on vocational courses at schools in the local sixth form consortium. Students in the sixth form have regular 'future pathways' sessions to prepare them for university, apprenticeships or work.

In **Quality of Education**, the inspectors judged our school to be 'Good'. They noted the phenomenal practice of our teaching staff in many areas including:

- Pupils throughout this large school enjoy their learning.
- Throughout the school, leaders have thought about the subjects they want pupils to study and how pupils should study them. Curriculum planning is typically ambitious, and teaching focuses on making sure that pupils understand and remember essential knowledge. As a result, pupils get better in each subject and achieve well overall.
- Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious programme of learning that aims to meet the needs of all pupils. This includes making sure that primary-aged pupils learn to read quickly. In the secondary school, most pupils build up their knowledge and understanding effectively.
- In the early years, primary and sixth-form phases, leaders have carefully planned the knowledge they want pupils to know and remember. This helps pupils to achieve well. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They choose activities and resources to help pupils understand new ideas. Teachers check pupils' understanding regularly. They typically make sure that pupils' previous learning is secure before building on that knowledge.
- Leaders have made reading a priority in the primary school. This begins in the early years. The teaching of phonics is carefully planned and delivered. Staff receive training on the phonics programme and teach it consistently. Teachers make sure that pupils take reading books home that match the sounds they know. Story times and book corners in classrooms foster a love of reading. Teachers check pupils' reading development carefully. They intervene quickly to support pupils if they fall behind.

Like any report, there are areas identified for the school to work on – but all of these, I am pleased to say, are areas we have already prioritised as central to our school improvement work going forwards.

I am delighted that our vibrant school community clearly shone through during this inspection. Our young people gave a fantastic account of themselves and the inspectors told us how much they enjoyed their visit. They got to see our school as the dynamic, inclusive and purposeful place that we know it to be.

I would like to thank all the parents who got in touch during the inspection period and since for their supportive messages. Our mission to level the playing field and unlock the potential of every child continues. I look forward to working with you all as we continue this important work.

The full report is now available on the school website.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clare Cross', with a stylized, cursive font.

Clare Cross

Acting Principal