

22nd February 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are pleased to share our [Ofsted Report](#) with you. As you will see, the school received an overall grading of 'good', with two areas judged as "outstanding".

As set out in my recent letter to you, the vast majority of schools with longstanding outstanding judgments have been downgraded to good or worse. So to be judged to be outstanding in two areas is a great achievement. While we deserved to retain our overall 'outstanding' grade, we knew it would be extremely hard to achieve.

The inspection was a full graded inspection and there are five areas of focus:

1. **Quality of Education (Good)**

The Inspection framework is very different from the one in 2008. The curriculum is at the heart of the inspection and you will read that this was judged as a strength. ***"Leaders have planned and sequenced a broad curriculum, which is ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND... They identify pupils' needs effectively and train teachers to use a range of strategies to maximise pupils' independence and learning of the curriculum."***

Evidence was gathered from visiting lessons, looking at books, interviewing subject leaders and interviewing small groups of children. The key area where we have challenged Ofsted is that the lead inspector did not follow guidance, which is to observe some very young children reading with their usual adult, instead she wanted to hear them read herself. Unsurprisingly, being expected to read to a complete stranger affected some of the children's confidence and willingness to read aloud. On this basis she judged that teachers had not matched books correctly to the children's levels of reading, which is incorrect.

The report acknowledges that ***"Leaders have made sure that the phonics programme is embedded. Staff have been well trained to teach phonics effectively to children from their Reception year."*** Sadly because a child mispronounced a sound in one of the groups, and the teacher didn't hear because she was working with another child, this was deemed a weakness. We have challenged the exaggeration of this point, but this and the point about matching of books above has led to a judgement of good rather than outstanding, which our provision deserves.

2. **Behaviour and Attitudes (Outstanding)**

We were delighted that the report is clear in stating ***"pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite and welcoming to all. Bullying is uncommon."*** We know this to be true because, with your support, we nurture and support our children to be the best they can be. Those that need extra help with their behaviour receive this, and improve over time, so that ***"pupils are motivated and positive about their learning. Leaders, together with all staff, have created a respectful school culture."***

3. Personal Development (Outstanding)

Inspectors recognised that children have an exceptional experience at The Blue School. The report notes that children have **“meaningful opportunities”** to develop as leaders, and we explained how this builds systematically, so that all children benefit by the time they leave Y6. The report notes that the children learn how to keep themselves safe and are **“encouraged to contribute positively to society”**. We are very proud of children’s courage in standing up for what is right, their “courageous advocacy” and were pleased that this was recognised: **Pupils were unanimous that difference should be celebrated and not something to discriminate against.**

4. Leadership (Good)

The leadership judgement was determined by the Quality of Education judgement and was therefore limited to ‘good’. Nonetheless, as you will read, leaders are **“ambitious for all pupils”** and **“have created a respectful school culture”**. Unfortunately the outstanding work of our governors was not mentioned, nor many other aspects of fantastic leadership at all levels of the school. These were commented on during the inspection, but were not included in the final report.

As parents you know that one of the most important aspects of school is having a stable staff. The report recognises that we have achieved this because **“staff feel valued, supported and nurtured”**. We provide high quality training for staff, and ensure **“teachers ... are well prepared to take on leadership responsibilities.** This is very important for the successful future of the Blue School and we are very proud of our staff.

5. Early Years Provision (Good)

As you will see there is very little mention of the Early Years (Nursery and Reception) in the report, other than stating that the curriculum lays the foundations for future learning. We feel that the problematic points on reading affected this grade and obscured many examples of strong practice and vocabulary that the inspectors witnessed.

And finally...

To be clear, most schools would be thrilled with this report. We are disappointed because we know that provision genuinely meets the criteria for outstanding in all areas. Since November we have challenged the report based on factual accuracy and through the complaints process.

The Ofsted complaints procedure meant that we were unable to share the report with you until now. Behind the scenes we will continue to challenge this outcome.

Finally, many thanks for your incredible support and enthusiasm throughout the inspection process, and every day as we greet you at the gates or in the playground. The Blue School has a wonderful community and will continue to grow from strength to strength.

Best wishes

Rachel Jones
Headteacher

Stephanie Ajayi
Chair of Governors