



Applecroft School

Nurturing Potential, Inspiring Minds, Changing Lives

Monday 22nd January 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: Ofsted Inspection Feedback

Following the school's Ofsted inspection in November 2023, we have now received the final report and I am delighted to be able to share the outcome, positive feedback and report with you.

The inspection was carried out over 2 days, by 3 inspectors, all of which are current Headteachers. In addition, the lead inspector spoke with me and senior leaders on the phone the day before the inspection to understand the school's context, our self-evaluation of where we judge the school to currently be and plan the logistics for the two days.

During the inspection, inspectors spoke to children, staff, governors and parents. They carried out '[Deep Dives](#)' into Reading, Maths, RE, Music and Computing. They spoke with leaders across the school including governors, senior leaders i.e. the Senior Leadership Team and Curriculum Leaders.

Ofsted evaluate the school's effectiveness in 5 broad areas:

- Quality of Education,
- Behaviour and Attitudes,
- Personal Development,
- Early Years,
- Leadership and Management.

They then use these individual gradings in the areas above to then decide on an overall effectiveness of the school.

The current Ofsted inspection process and framework is unrecognisable from the one that the school was judged against nearly 15 years ago, and therefore the two are in no way comparable. The current '[school inspection handbook](#)', that sets out the standards that schools are expected to meet, and are measured against in inspection, was released in May 2019. Its release marked a change in direction from Ofsted away from external assessment data such as SATs, to a real focus on curriculum and with it, yet again, another substantial increase in expectations on what schools should be doing. Since its release in May 2019, 80% of previously 'outstanding' schools, have been reassessed to either 'good' or 'requires improvement'.

Currently, there are 4 possible gradings given:

- Inadequate,
- Requires Improvement,

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- Good,
- Outstanding.

Under the current framework, outstanding really means 'exceptional'.

I am pleased to say, that while the inspection was extremely rigorous, we found inspectors to be highly professional, fair, open and knowledgeable and their grading and areas for improvement matched the school's own self-evaluation.

They judged the school as follows:

- Quality of Education - **Good**
- Behaviour and Attitudes - **Good** (in fact very, very good and not far from outstanding!)
- Personal Development - **Outstanding**
- Early Years - **Good**
- Leadership and Management - **Good**

Therefore, the school was judged overall as '**Good**'.

The last part of the inspection process is the 'Feedback Meeting' where inspectors share the full findings of their visit with senior leaders and governors. Sadly, not all of this is then included in the formal report for which there is a set template and word count but I have included highlights from this meeting at the very bottom of this letter, to provide you with a fuller picture.

Inspectors were very positive of the changes we have made to our curriculum and recognise the huge amount of work and effort that has gone into its implementation over the past 18 months and the journey we are on. The two areas for development identified by inspectors, are both linked with the continuation of this process.

The first involves us continuing to support teachers to develop the required skills, necessary to teach such an ambitious curriculum as effectively as possible, ensuring all pupils are knowing more and remembering more. This includes in the subjects that require more bespoke skills such as music and computing.

The second, involves the school continuing to monitor and evaluate how each subject is being implemented and, as our new curriculum becomes more and more embedded across the school, ensuring that leaders have a precise understanding of each subject's strengths and weaknesses, that enables them to provide bespoke training for staff.

I am pleased to report that leaders are in full agreement with the action points above and are already working towards both as part of our current school improvement plan and our drive to continue to refine and strengthen the implementation of our highly ambitious curriculum.

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A copy of the official report, that provides a shorter summary of findings, is available on the school website under 'Statutory Information' or by [clicking here](#).

Lastly, I want to say thank you and well done to the whole 'Applecroft Family' - children, staff, parents and governors - former and current. We should all be pleased with the outcome and positive feedback shared about our school, and extremely proud, that together, we are realising our school's vision to be:

'A positive and inspiring community that nurtures each individual and empowers leaders for life'.

Best wishes,

Mrs Lisa Withe
Headteacher

Highlights from our Feedback Meeting:

Overall Effectiveness:

"This is a special place"

"Expectations are very high"

"Lots of things are fantastic, it is exciting where you are, with a chance to move things on by maintaining the current direction of travel - absolutely on the right track, need to sustain that and continue to be ambitious"

The Quality of Education:

"Curriculum is strong, ambition is really there"

"Curriculum is ambitious and designed for all pupils"

"Across the piece, curriculum design is very strong, leaders have spent a lot of time thinking about that, to get that consistency across the board in things like vocabulary. That is very effective, expectations are very high and that is effective"

"Adults are very successful in supporting children who are dysregulated"

"SEND pupils don't stand out because they are so well supported - they are not easily identified and are attaining well"

"SEND pupils are benefitting from really carefully thought through provision, leaders have done a lot of work on adaptation of SEND provision. The provision for EHCP children is also strong, as a result SEND pupils attain really well. I really like the fact that I can't identify the SEND pupils when I walk into a room because they are learning the same as their peers and getting the support they need. This is a credit to the impact of leaders"

"Leaders have prioritised reading, the 'Little Wandle' scheme is having a significant impact in terms of results there is a sharp focus"

"You can see the impact of the new curriculum"

"There is a strong calculation policy that is applied consistently across the school which supports children with their efficiency in maths - a real area of strength"

"Teachers have good subject knowledge"

"Maths, RE and Reading in KS2 are huge strengths"

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Behaviour and Attitudes:

- "This was a finely graded decision, not far from outstanding"
- "Your nursery is a very special place. What's happening in there is certainly outstanding"
- "There are high expectations from leaders"
- "The school is calm and orderly, pupils are polite, friendly, confident and love coming to school"
- "Relationships are respectful and supportive"
- "Children describe the school as a family"
- "Pupils are safe and they say they are safe"
- "Behaviour and attitudes are consistently good across lessons"
- "Older children support others. They treat others how they want to be treated"
- "Lunchtime routines are effective - one of the quietest dining halls we've ever seen - everything works like clockwork. Lunchtimes are calm, very positive. The Leader in Me helps makes lunchtimes run smoothly"
- "Older children are a credit, respectful, caring, mature, treat each other as they wish to be treated. We see that in leadership roles at lunchtime"
- "Pupils report bullying is very rare and when it does happen staff deal with it. That's reflected in bullying record keeping, records are really detailed, so they fully reflect what staff see. When it does happen, staff take strong action and it doesn't repeat"
- "Attendance is a real strength, a lot of work and effort goes into that and is paying off"
- "Attendance is approached in a similar way to the way leaders work with safeguarding, a team of four people, checking each other's work, challenging each other, supporting each other. It is not falling on one person, there is a team and they hold each other accountable - that is a theme in Applecroft's leadership and management - it is the same with governance, all are really involved"

Personal Development:

- "So much! One of the strongest provisions we've ever seen"
- "Personal development is a huge strength of the school, leaders are passionate"
- "What the school does is exemplary and is worthy to be shared with others. So much high-quality practice. So much further down the line than anything I've ever seen"
- "A beacon and worthy of sharing with others"
- "The offer is very strategically planned, coherent, Leadership programme of the Habits really helps children to demonstrate the school values. The school values shine through"
- "The core offer is very big, rigorously planned and well delivered"
- "Leader in Me' is a core part of the school and that makes a huge difference to the children. They hugely value it and the fact that those opportunities extend across all SEND and pupil premium children is really important Leaders target those children to make sure they have all those opportunities - 100% have represented the school and 100% have participated in leadership opportunities - that's outstanding, and happens because leaders have targeted that outcome....many of the children would have been reluctant. That speaks to a great depth of thinking that has gone into the personal development programme"
- "There is a range of enrichment clubs and strong take up from disadvantaged pupils. Leaders carefully track this group's participation and it's their mission to ensure these children take part. Financial barriers don't exist as the school makes this happen. 100% of disadvantaged children are taking part - the targeting and careful provision mapping makes sure no child is missed"

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"Experiences are high quality, there is a breadth of experience, children have learnt the personal development curriculum very well. They know how to keep themselves safe, how to look after themselves, they are very mature, and they talk with great maturity around sensitive subjects like protected characteristics"

"So, personal development is exceptional around talents and interests, the fact that children are leading in, and championing areas that are important to them, writing to the Headteacher asking for things to be different, having opportunities through the 'Leader in Me' to make a positive contribution to their community, that is all exceptional. That is all different - we see a lot of schools, other schools do not give their children radios! (i.e. walkie-talkies), but it's meaningful and that's what matters"

"There are different strands to personal development, the curriculum interweaves with the Applecroft Adventure, with 'Leader in Me' they are complementary and don't repeat each other. Someone has done an enormous amount of thinking on that"

"You should be really proud of your provision"

Leadership and Management:

"Leaders have high expectations, give consideration to workload but also put children first. Last year the staff worked really hard because they had to embrace the new curriculum"

"Leaders deserve credit for making bold decisions with the curriculum"

"Leaders have high expectations - they are realistic and honest with the school's evaluation"

"There is a strong team ethos - governors and senior leaders work more closely together as a team"

"Governors are a real strength, they are impressive and their level of understanding. Governors know where the school is"

"There are strong positive relationships"

"SLT are mindful and accommodating of workload. They work the staff hard, but when it's too much they put their hands up and leaders support them"

"Staff feel supported. Staff are positive about working here, staff survey was very positive, it's a happy team of people"

"Safeguarding is effective, it's very, very effective. Meticulous. Processes are tight. Team working is strong. Leaders give it due prominence, staff are well-trained, actions are clear, leaders keep fighting for what is best for children and families".

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