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An Oxford Diocesan
School

Headteacher
Mrs J Barnett BA (QTS)

9th September 2022

Dear Parent,

Attached is a copy of our most recent Ofsted Inspection report. As a school and Governing Body, we are writing to share our thoughts in respect of the Inspection's findings and most importantly, our plan to address the areas that have been identified for the school to develop.

Firstly, we would like to affirm that our school is the vibrant, caring and successful school that it always has been, where children are valued and encouraged to be the best they can be. Our vision, 'Head, Hand, Heart' is central to everything we do and drives our SMAS curriculum so that by the time children leave our school they are well rounded, independent individuals.

Naturally, we are disappointed by the Inspectors' assessment as a result of the two days they spent in our school and particularly their comments surrounding our approach to the delivery of phonics and our year-on-year curriculum design in some subjects.

Phonics and Reading

Whilst we had plans to implement a new systematic synthetic phonics program (SSP), as recommended by the Government in September 2021, and indeed preparation and evaluation formed part of our school Development Plan 2021 – 2022, we did not implement this as quickly as Ofsted would have liked. As planned, following extensive research, our chosen scheme, from the latest approved list published in April this year, has been purchased, training has been scheduled and this new scheme will be implemented across the school as soon as we have taken delivery of all resources.

Our current approach to the teaching of phonics has served our children well over many years as evidenced by our results.

	2019			2020			2021			2022		
	School	Bucks	National	School	Bucks	National	School	Bucks	National	School	Bucks	National
Year 1 Phonics	89.7 %	82%	82%	*			95%			87%		**
Year 2 Phonics	98.3 %	92%	91%							97%		
KS1 Reading	88.3 %	78%	75%				88.3 %	76%	67%	88%		
KS2 Reading	83.3 %	77%	73%				94.9 %	83%	76%	82%		

*No data available due to C-19 and national lockdown

** We are yet to receive validated data for 2022 for Bucks and Nationally. However, early indications show that our school is once again significantly above both the Bucks and National average. We will provide you with further details on this as soon as data is available.

Any child who is unsuccessful in the Phonics Screening Assessment at the end of Year 2 is supported individually to develop their decoding and reading skills once they enter KS2 through a variety of methods and have all made progress.



It was pleasing to see that the Inspectors saw and recognised that, *'leaders are rightly keen to promote and nurture pupils' love of reading.'* They valued the introduction of our reading spines and of course our wonderful library, commenting, *'They provide plentiful opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure.'*

Curriculum Design

Ofsted recognised that leaders of our school are *'ambitious for all pupils to learn a well-structured and vibrant curriculum'*. Over the last few years, schools have been encouraged to develop their own personalised curriculum. This is something that we have worked on over recent years and is constantly under review to ensure the curriculum remains current and appropriate for the children in our care.

We recognise that some of our subjects are not yet as fully developed as others and already have a robust plan in place to ensure that these subjects have a coherently sequenced curriculum that builds in a clearly structured way. We do however believe that children in our school have access to a wide ranging curriculum, that enables them to develop the key knowledge and skills they require, and are making progress and achieving across all areas.

Children are supported to continue their learning journeys from year to year, and across subjects, through immersive curriculum days and weeks which have shown to provide our children with a wealth of different opportunities, including space domes, visiting Roman soldiers and an interactive petting farm. This helps to cement pupils' learning through first hand experiences.

Leadership

As leaders of the school, we aspire to make learning engaging and accessible to all, in a safe environment, where children thrive and prosper and are well-prepared for life in modern Britain. We embrace our responsibility to do the best for the children every day and as a leadership team are reviewing our action plans to ensure we are addressing the points raised in the report. As mentioned previously, we already had plans in place to further develop the areas identified by Ofsted and will continue to move forward and build on these foundations throughout this academic year.

Governors acknowledge that there have been some areas where they have lacked the expertise to sufficiently monitor the quality of education or assimilate the information provided and are addressing this through a review of Governance and an action plan.

It is important to acknowledge the strengths that Ofsted saw in our school:

- *Pupils describe their school as a welcoming and inclusive community*
- *Pupils feel safe and happy and rightly trust that staff will deal with any worries or problems quickly*
- *There is a robust culture of safeguarding*
- *Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour*
- *Leaders are ambitious for every pupil to thrive and succeed at school and beyond*
- *Pupils like the wide range of opportunities they have to develop their creative, sporting and leadership skills*
- *Teachers have strong subject knowledge and use it to check and adapt lessons to help all pupils*
- *Staff are skilled at identifying and providing for the pastoral and wider needs of pupils with SEND*
- *Governors are skilled and knowledgeable in many aspects of their role*

We know that there is work to be done and have returned from the summer break ready and determined to implement our action plan and continue to drive the school forward. I am sure you will agree we have an amazing team of staff at SMAS and would like to thank them for their continued hard work and dedication. We are very lucky to have them and know that despite this disappointment, they will continue to strive to ensure that each and every child leaves SMAS as a well-rounded individual fully equipped for the next stage in their education.

I apologise that this information is being shared with you so late on a Friday afternoon, but unfortunately due to a number of errors in the final report, it was necessary to return it back to Ofsted three times this week for amendments, which has meant that I have only received the final version this afternoon.

Should you wish to hear our response and plans in more detail, you are invited to a meeting on Tuesday 13th September at 5:30pm in the School Hall.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J Barnett
Headteacher

Mrs A Philpott
Deputy Headteacher

Mr R Mason
Chair of Governors