

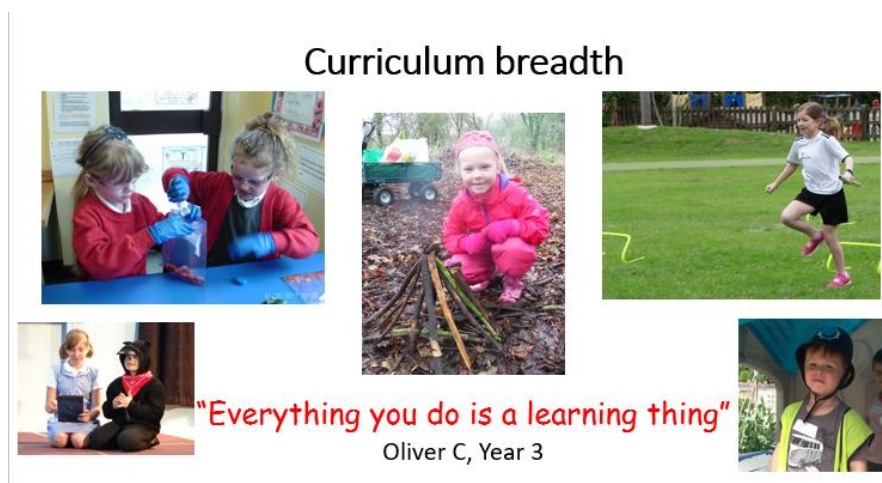
## Parent Forum – Ofsted Report (17<sup>th</sup> January 2018)

The meeting was attended by approximately 80 parents/carers, 13 staff and 7 Governors.

Mr Edwards-Grundy welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Kathy Winrow, who is the Chair of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (ODST) Board of Trustees, a National Leader of Education and has 20-years' experience in secondary headship.

### The national picture

- Over the past few years there have been very radical changes to the curriculum, the biggest changes since the new curriculum was introduced thirty years ago.
- New testing was introduced for Year 6 children which was much harder in content and demands very fast recall, (32 problems to be solved in 30 minutes).
- The new curriculum has a significantly raised bar in terms of attainment.
- In 2015, prior to the introduction of the new curriculum, 80% of children reached the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths combined. In the first year of the new curriculum (July 2016) only 53 % of children nationally achieved the expected standard, in 2017 this increased to 61%.
- Prior to the curriculum change levels were used to measure children's attainment, the system was familiar and well understood. With the introduction of the new curriculum new tracking systems have been required to measure attainment and progress.
- The new tracking systems can only have been in use for two years because of the national change to the assessment systems, it is the case for every school in the country. The new measure 'Age Related Expectations' is new across the country.
- Since 2016 children have been tested on a new curriculum, which has a raised bar – it has been a challenge for all schools.



- In response to the more challenging curriculum there has been a move nationally towards pushing children in to a 'further, faster, higher' model.
- Schools are narrowing the curriculum that they are offering in order to meet the more rigorous demands of the new curriculum.
- Ofsted has recognised that this approach is not good for children.
- At The Blake School we have been committed to providing a rich and broad curriculum and have not sacrificed this in favour of teaching to the test.

- Staff and governors are committed to ensuring that children attending The Blake receive an education which meets the social and emotional well-being needs of children as well as the needs of their brains.
- You measure what you value and at The Blake School that is much wider than the Ofsted criteria – we have been very open with you about that. Ofsted is a vital part of the school improvement process, but we value more than that.
- We measure the wellbeing of the children and the health of the school through our annual parent, child and staff surveys, we really value the information from these and are keen to take on the views they highlight, rather than simply the shifting national agenda.

*“At its most basic, for the past two centuries the Church of England has looked to promote an education that allows children, young people and adults to live out Jesus’s promise of life in all its fullness. That means enabling every person not only to grow in wisdom and to learn skills but to develop character and the spiritual, intellectual and emotional resources needed to live a good life, as an individual but also in a community.” Archbishop Justin Welby, December 2017*

Staff and governors are very aware that results need to improve but it was encouraging to see, on the front page of the report, the inspectors noting the strength of what is currently happening in the building.

**“Pupils participate in an extensive and rich curriculum. This motivates and engages pupils, and develops a good understanding of the world they live in.” Ofsted report, December 2017**

Year 6 need to be ready for secondary school and to be ready to engage with that curriculum, not simply trained to pass tests. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) carry out an annual survey which last year revealed that attitude to, and aptitude for, work rank well ahead of formal qualifications when considering an applicant’s suitability for a role. Academic qualifications do matter, but they are not the whole picture.

### **Values and Growth Mindset**

- Ongoing work is being done to give the school’s values real teeth, encouraging children to apply them to their learning behaviours.
- Some of the informal feedback that senior leaders received from the inspectors was delightful, they were very effusive in their praise of the things that they saw happening in the school.

### **The Ofsted Process**

- Three inspectors observed twenty-four lessons. The inspectors spoke to children and parents and 118 parent surveys were completed. Playtimes and behaviour were observed, and school lunches were eaten. Nine governors met with the lead inspector and between them the inspectors were with members of the Senior Leadership Team scrutinising data for all bar about half an hour over the two days.
- As senior leaders we knew we had very particular questions to answer and as a professional process it was fantastic, a very valuable process.

- The inspection team that we had were excellent, they were neither nice nor easy, but it was a professional process which provided a really good opportunity to go through the issues.
- We really value the pointers that are contained within the report.
- I was really glad to see Ofsted because it marked the conclusion of a very difficult season for the school. The data challenges have kept me awake at night for a couple of years.

### **Requires improvement, but...**

- As staff and governors, we had been very clear regarding the concerns about the data coming through the school and raised these with ODST as far back as two years ago.
- Ofsted want to make sure the rigour that they were already seeing in the school stays.
- In order to make some of the necessary changes there will be a need to walk the tightrope between forcing children to jump a bar and having a broad curriculum that has prepared them well for their secondary education.
- There is plenty of capacity within the school to continue to move the school forward.
- The school is supported by an adviser from ODST, who is working with staff to further develop the school's capacity for improvement.
- There has been a lot that has shifted over the past few years.
- These comments all come from the first page of the Ofsted report (school's highlight)–
  - ❖ "In the past, leaders and governors had not evaluated the weaknesses and strengths of the school rigorously enough"
  - ❖ "Recently introduced strategies...have not had time to fully develop."
  - ❖ "Until recently, [teaching] has not ensured that all children do as well as they might."
- The Early Years curriculum and assessment have not changed and so there is more established practice in that department, which was rightly noted as being of a very high standard.
- I wanted the Ofsted outcome to be higher, but I am pleased that the report bore out what I know about the school.
  - ❖ "Current pupils are making faster progress."
  - ❖ "The school is improving"
  - ❖ "Children in the early years get off to a good start"
  - ❖ "Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and behave well"

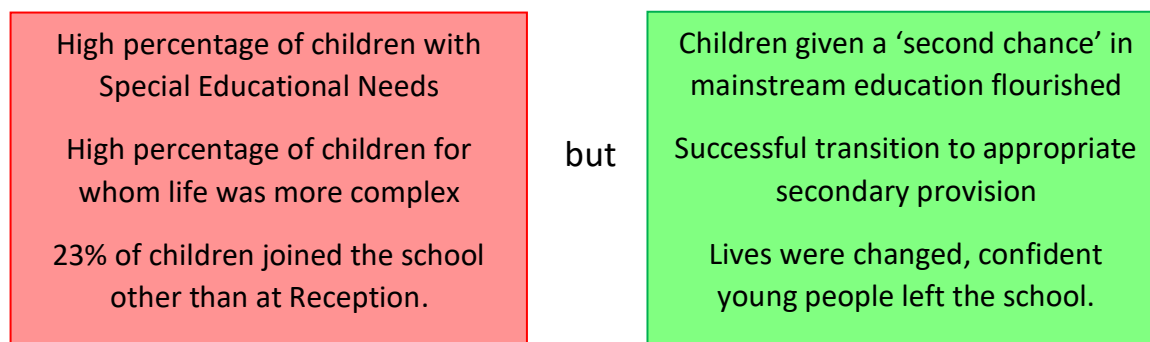
### **Requires Improvement – what does it mean for us?**

- The Ofsted outcome was expected because the data was known, it wasn't wanted, but it was not a surprise.
- As a head I have a concern about the potential negative impact on staff of this outcome. Staff pour their heart and soul into their work, they are heavily invested in the school. The staff are however still a very buoyant team, they are pleased with the strengths highlighted in the report and recognise the ways in which the report can be used as a lever for moving forward.
- There is a risk of a loss of confidence amongst the parent body, one of the reasons for holding the meeting this evening is to allay your fears and answer your questions.
- The report really encourages us to drive for improvement, irrespective of the Ofsted grade, we know we have to do better.
- The Ofsted straightjacket is a snapshot of the school, a report based on a very specific period of time.

- The report does not mean that the school has no capacity for improvement; the report is very clear that there is capacity to improve and that improvements are already taking place.
- School improvement does not rely on just me, it is owned by everyone: staff, governors and ODST.

### Requires improvement – why?

- The data for last year specifically (Year 6 – July 2017) was very poor. Given the data this was the best grade that Ofsted could give.
- The 2017 Year 6 cohort is one that I am extremely proud of, but they were a complex cohort of children, with a unique level of challenge.



- It was particularly unlucky for the school in respect of data outcomes that this was the cohort that hit the new tests and the new, more challenging curriculum.
- Putting a great deal of extra pressure on the children would not have significantly improved their readiness for secondary school, nor improved their chances of passing the tests; in fact, it may well have done great harm.
- It does not show on the data, but there were many significant achievements within this year group and they were all well prepared for transition to secondary school.

### Next steps

- The inspectors went through the school's existing School Development Plan (SDP) to establish whether it is addressing the school's improvement needs; they agreed that it is.
- The improvements highlighted by Ofsted are already in our existing SDP, which was written long before Ofsted came.
- The over-riding message from Ofsted was to hold to the course.
- There were some things that we noted with Ofsted that may add complexity to the overall picture, which alongside ensuring that we respond quickly enough to national changes have already been the subject of reflection by the staff team.
- The data predictions for the end of this year are broadly in line with national averages – the data over the past two years, particularly last year, was a blip.
- I am fully expecting that when Ofsted return the outcome will be different.
- Last year the parent survey was circulated earlier in the year to allow us more time to analyse the responses and write the SDP. This year, to ensure that adequate time is given to the process the survey will be circulated around the Easter break.
- Although many of you will have written comments on the survey that you completed for Ofsted, we don't see those comments, the inspectors only share the headline data with us.

If you made comments on that survey, please do add them to the parent questionnaire that we will circulate.

- There have been a couple of Parent Forums on assessment, but these were relatively poorly attended. If you would find a re-run of these sessions valuable, please do note that on the questionnaire. Information from the previous sessions is available on the school website.



**"The teachers and my friends give me courage to carry on"**

Isla, Year 5

Kathy Winrow spoke briefly to the meeting reiterating that the school is improving; the Ofsted report does not say that the school *is going* to improve, rather that it *is* improving. The Head, staff, Governors and ODST are all working together to move the school forward.

### **Thank-you**

- The on-going support of parents/carers is great to have and we are very glad of it, your feedback and input are important to us and we listen to it carefully.
- You have wonderful children, who it is a pleasure to teach.
- The Blake School is a good place for your children, it is a great community to be a part of.

The meeting closed with the floor being opened for questions and discussion, these are recorded separately.

**"Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and behave well. They offer visitors a warm welcome and are keen to engage in conversation." Ofsted, December 2017.**