

June 2019

Dear Parents / Carers

Re: Ofsted Inspection Judgement May 2019

This communication makes reference to Dove First School's most recent inspection report. We were not allowed to write to you until it was published on the Ofsted website.

As you know, Dove was recently inspected by Ofsted. The inspection was carried out under the current Ofsted framework which has always been promoted as being more demanding than the previous framework.

The overall judgement of the inspectors was that Dove First School Requires Improvement. We were not surprised by this judgement and very encouraged that the report recognises the significant improvements at the School in the last year. Crucially the Ofsted team judged our new leadership and management teams to be 'Good' and were of the opinion that:

- The new headteacher has quickly established an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The headteacher is developing the skills of middle leaders. Together, they are taking determined action to improve the school.
- Leaders have changed the approach to the teaching of mathematics. As a result, current pupils are making good progress in this subject.
- The school is a welcoming and inclusive community. Staff know pupils as individuals and take good care of them. Pupils get on well together and show kindness to each other.
- Pupils' behaviour and personal development are strong. They have positive attitudes to learning and work hard.
- Pupils with high-level special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from strong support and make good progress against their targets.

We were also encouraged by the fact that the level of support given to the school by staff, pupils and parents indicates that our community recognises we are rapidly improving and that we are striving to provide a good quality of education for our pupils. Indeed, at every parents' evening we have held this year, we have been overwhelmed by positive feedback from parents. We feel that this is an expression of the confidence that our community has in the school.

The inspectors' analysis of some of our data for our groups of pupils was the main reason for the judgement. The main reason for a new Ofsted Framework being introduced in September 2019 is precisely to reduce the emphasis on data within the judgement and to focus the inspection more on the curriculum. The inspection team did recognise the "broad curriculum" in the school.

Nevertheless, we need to become a good school and we will be working extremely hard to achieve this grade at the next inspection.

Clearly this judgement is not good enough and I want to reassure you that we will continue to be relentless in driving standards forward to help all of our pupils to be as successful as they can be. Ofsted noted that:

“The new headteacher has quickly established an accurate understanding of the school’s strengths and weaknesses.” We will be building on this understanding and addressing all of the areas for improvement that are identified in the report.

We can expect a very significant level of support, in making this improvement, from our new relationship with Staffordshire University Academies Trust (SUAT). You will be aware that we are expecting to join SUAT in September 2019. They are a large Trust of 19 schools and within their family of academies they have an extensive knowledge of school improvement; indeed, some of their academies have been on this journey to success. They also have a very strong link to the Education Department at Staffordshire University, with all of its very significant resources.

The school has already started its work on an Improvement Plan in order to build upon our acknowledged successes. We are confident that this plan will bring about improvements quite quickly. We have already agreed a programme of support from SUAT, at their expense, which will include:

- Support from their Director of School Improvement, who is an ex Headteacher and Local Leader of Education
- Support from one of the SUAT Headteachers, who is Head of an outstanding school and a National Leader of Education
- Support from a School Improvement Partner who is an ex Headteacher of two outstanding schools
- Support from a SUAT Headteacher whose own school has moved rapidly from requires improvement to a good judgement
- Support from the Chief Executive Officer who is a former Executive Headteacher, Headteacher of an outstanding school and National Leader of Education
- Support from one of the consultants that SUAT employs, who is a serving Ofsted Lead Inspector

Their expertise will quality assure what we are currently implementing in order to bring about the changes needed.

The Trust is committed to ensuring they play a significant part in supporting the role of leaders and staff at the school. The Trust’s Chief Executive Officer, Keith Hollins, said, “The rapid response of the school, its senior staff and governors is an encouragingly positive demonstration of the school’s strong determination to address the issues contained in the report”.

We are also fortunate to have a very supportive local governing body. Governors will be taking an important role in supportively challenging leaders at all levels within the school to ensure rapid progress continues to happen from this point. The school would like to acknowledge the work of these governors who have supported us and our community by working tirelessly as critical friends over the last year.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for all the support you gave the school in connection with the inspection. The exceptionally high levels of backing from parents and pupils were noted by the inspector. I can reassure you that the school is working even harder to address the issues raised in the report. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss any aspect of the Ofsted Report in more detail.

I will ensure that we keep all parents up-to-date with current developments and strategic planning through our website as well as other means. If you would like a hard copy of the report please contact the school office and we will issue a paper copy.

Yours sincerely,

Kerry Fabi
Headteacher

Kevin Flower
Chair of Governors