

Happy New Year to all members of our School community.

The purpose of this letter is to share with you the assessment of OFSTED following their inspection in December 2016. We have attached a copy of the report for your information. I can also confirm there will be a **meeting at 6pm on Wednesday 25th January 2017** to discuss the report and answer any questions you may have.

The report makes sobering reading and for some of you may be a surprise. I hope this letter explains the context but above all reassures Parents that having made some difficult decisions and significantly improving the way we monitor and hold to account we have built solid foundations upon which the school is rapidly improving and we are confident as agreed by OFSTED that we will be a Good school in very short time.

The Governing body in meetings with parents in 2016 have been expressing a view that we were no longer an outstanding school but one that had some great strengths but one that also needed to improve in some areas. When OFSTED visited this was a view they agreed with. We are a school that Requires Improvement but one with a strong plan, one that is making the necessary changes and showing signs of sustained improvement.

We have seen a decline in our results for a number of years. The school was slow to take on board the challenges of a new national curriculum and had not changed our assessment procedures so that they provide teachers with accurate and useful information. Our most able pupils did not achieve as well as they should have. The School could have responded faster to a decline and been more questioning and challenging of itself.

What is important for the school was the fact that the Governing body did recognise change was needed and with a willing, committed and professional teaching staff set about making changes which have had an impact. This summer we halted a decline in our results and saw improvements. OFSTED say “ **Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school’s position, and the actions they are taking to improve matters are having a positive impact. There are positive signs that a recovery is underway.**”. Further they report that “**improvements made to date show that the effectiveness of governance is increasing.**”.

Credit is given to the school in the way it has improved Safeguarding. It is recognised that **Assessment procedures have been put in place that allow leaders and teachers to check accurately on how well pupils are doing. This information is being used effectively to look at the attainment and progress of some of the key groups in the school.** Praise was given to the school Leaders who “**are now not shying away from tackling the school’s weak performance and their work is already having a positive impact.**”

Combine this recognition that things are getting significantly better with a school that “**is a happy and harmonious place. Pupils are friendly and welcoming to visitors, and display excellent manners.**” and attendance rates that are consistently good you can see we are in a better position than we have been. Along with the “**effective provision in early**

years ensures we give our children get off to a good start” we do have some very solid foundations and things to be proud about.

The fact we require improvement means we will be visited again shortly and on a few more occasions over the coming 2 years. This is welcomed as we all want to make sure we are progressing in the right way and at the speed that our children deserve. To be fair, had OFSTED visited later this year then we believe the assessment of the school would have been different as we would have had longer to have demonstrated the embedded improvements.

We have 2 objectives we are working on we can discuss further with parents ;

- Improving the effectiveness of teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress, particularly for the most able pupils
- Improving the effectiveness of leadership and management

May I thank everyone in the school community for their support. It has been excellent and much appreciated. In particular I thank Mrs Butterworth and Mrs Walczak before her for their strong leadership, guidance and setting the right framework for us to improve. A big thanks to our school leaders and all teaching staff. They have made significant changes which has stopped a decline in results and which are now paying off. I also thank our Governors who give freely of their time and who have had to make some very challenging decisions in the best interests of our children and whom OFSTED recognise **“show great commitment to the school”**.

Finally, when Bishop John became our Bishop he shared with us his daily prayer. A prayer that strengthens our sense of purpose, unity and determination and for our Lord to be with us in our lives. It is a very simple prayer...“Stay with us, Lord, on our journey”. St Thomas More has been on a journey and is still on one. We are focused on what we need to do and it is making a difference. We need to continue improving and I ask for everyone's continued support and prayers.

Yours faithfully.

Mark Gifford

On behalf of the Governing Body