

Elmhurst School

Making a Positive Difference to the Quality of Learning
Headteacher ♦ Mrs Rachel Lee



5 April 2019

Dear Parents/Carers,

Actions and Outcomes since our Ofsted Inspection of October 2018

Second Report to Parents/Carers

At the Ofsted inspection meeting held for parents and carers on 17 December 2018, I indicated that we would keep you up to date with the progress being made by the school in addressing the weaknesses identified in the school's inspection report. The plan is to provide feedback to you every half term and this is the second report and follows the first report issued on 14 February 2019.

The key headline is that the school and governors continue to respond positively to weaknesses identified in the inspection report and much development work has taken place. To support sustained improvements, the school's leadership team has been receiving coaching to ensure that they can be effective in their roles. Governors have improved the way they work and the level of challenge and scrutiny they undertake. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and those areas requiring further attention.

The main focus at the school continues to be on improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. The school has received very effective support from the Local Authority with a Teaching Excellence Practitioner working at Elmhurst with a number of teachers and giving regular feedback to the senior leadership team at the school. Her feedback shows that the teachers are responding to her advice and this is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Lessons are now more clearly focused on key learning objectives linking to the Programmes of Study in the National Curriculum. The pace of lessons and the level of challenge have both improved.

Due to changes at the Local Authority, the support from the Teaching Excellence Practitioner will cease this week. However, the Local Authority has commissioned the Great Learners Trust, who are sponsoring Elmhurst as we become an academy, to take over the support from the start of the summer term.

Some low level disruption in lessons was noted in the inspection report and we have tackled this in two ways. The improvements to the quality of teaching have been a key factor in reducing low level disruption. We have also been supported by a Behaviour Expert from the local Pupil Referral Unit who is working in the school coaching staff. This twin-track approach is making a positive difference. Pupils continue to behave well around the school and at breaks and lunchtimes.

In my previous letter, I mentioned that we have purchased additional resources called Power Maths, which back up the schemes of learning of the White Rose Mastery Maths Hub used by the school. These new resources have increased the level of challenge in maths lessons, leading to higher level learning from the pupils. The pupils are very positive about Power Maths as this feedback from two Year 2 pupils shows:

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Maths in Year 2 is challenging and amazing and we want to tell you all about it. We have been using our new Power Maths books which are great because we can write inside them. There are also special characters to help us with our maths called Sparks, Ash, Dexter, Astrid and Flo. We usually get part-whole models with missing numbers and we have to work out what they are. Sometimes this is very tricky so we have to follow the 5Bs to help us. They are:

Brain – think and use your brain to work it out

Board – look at the work on the board

Book – look in your book to see examples

Buddy – ask your talk partner for help

Boss – ask your teacher for help if you have tried everything else.

We love our exciting Power Maths lessons!

We have continued to focus on improving the teaching of phonics through joint planning and the coaching of teaching staff. This is improving children's early language development and reading skills. Our forecasts for the proportion of Year 1 children expected to reach the required standard in the national phonics screening test later this school year are very positive.

The Local Authority's Early Years Advisor and the Teaching Excellence Practitioner have been involved in monitoring and supporting improvements in teaching and organisation in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Early Years Leader has been fully involved in discussions and is clear on what needs to be done and is showing the capacity to drive improvements with support for her colleagues.

There has been a focus on Speech and Language development in Early Years. There has been training on staff questioning to encourage children to think and articulate their learning. The impact of this is being seen in the improved interactions with children and staff and in the Reception Year there has been significant improvement in the percentage of children working at age related expectations in speech.

A major success in the Autumn Term was the strong improvement in pupils' attendance and a reduction of persistent absence. Pupils' attendance over the Autumn Term was the best ever and persistent absence the lowest ever. The attendance dropped in the first half of the Spring Term due mainly to children's illness in the first three weeks of the term. During the second half of this Spring Term, there has been an unfortunate increase in the number of parents taking their children on unauthorised family holidays, which impacts negatively on children's learning. This is disappointing. We do, however, thank those parents and carers who support their children by ensuring that they attend school regularly.

Since my previous letter we have appointed two parent governors and a new co-opted governor who is also a parent. This will provide a much stronger representation from parents on our governing board.

We commissioned a review of governance, which was undertaken by an external consultant. The same consultant also undertook a review of how we use our additional Pupil Premium funding. The governors have now received the reports on both reviews, which contain a number of helpful recommendations. These are being taken forward by the governing board.

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With support of the Great Learners Trust we are engaged in a recruitment drive to ensure that we have a strong staff team in place for September.

As mentioned above, the Local Authority has provided good support to the school and we had our second formal review day with a senior officer from the Local Authority on 27 March. Classrooms were visited and the actions the school is taking, including those of the governing board, to address the issues raised by Ofsted and covered in the school's new improvement plan were evaluated. The review day also focused on how effectively the school is responding to the support being provided by the Local Authority and the evidence that the school is improving.

The report of the review meeting noted that the school continues to make progress with the issues raised by Ofsted. School leaders' assessments of the quality of teaching and learning are accurate. Governors have increased their level of challenge and have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas requiring further improvement. The transition to an academy and becoming part of the Great Learners Trust is in hand with a target date of 1 June 2019. Consultations with staff and parents/carers are taking place following meetings with senior leaders from the Great Learners Trust.

As mentioned at the meeting for parents and carers in December, we re-started our Parent Forum meetings on Wednesday, 13 March with sessions at 8.50 am and at 7.00 pm on the same day. We covered the improvements made to address the issues raised by Ofsted and gave parents the opportunity to ask questions and make comments, particularly on what they feel is working well and what could be improved. We also updated parents on progress with becoming a sponsored academy. Unfortunately, the attendance at both sessions was low and we look forward to stronger representation from parents at our next Parents Forum in the Summer Term.

We have issued a survey to parents/carers with the responses being analysed during the school holiday and reported back to parents/carers in the Summer Term. We have also issued a survey to school staff to receive their views on aspects of the school.

I would like to thank you for continuing to support the school as it addresses the issues raised by Ofsted and secures rapid improvement.

The move to becoming an academy and becoming part of the Great Learners Trust will support the school in making further progress. This will enable us to benefit by belonging to a growing family of local schools with a common purpose to deliver outstanding teaching and learning opportunities for all children and build collaboration with other schools in the Trust.

For Elmhurst School – the Future is Looking Great!

Yours sincerely,



David Gamble
Chair of Governors