



Monday 16th March, 2020.

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We were pleased on Friday to be able to share the news that during the recent Ofsted inspection the school were judged to be a “Good” school. Whilst we realise this has arrived at a time of national crisis, we felt it important that we share the news with you and our wider community.

Being judged as a “Good” school is a milestone for the school having not been judged as offering pupils a good educational provision since 2007.

In the summer of 2017 the school achieved it’s worst ever outcomes. When I was fortunate enough to be offered the position of Principal in September 2017, the staff and I knew this wasn’t good enough and collectively we made a commitment to raising standards and driving improvements across all aspects of the school. The staff have worked tirelessly to rapidly improve the culture of the school and deliver a better education for our pupils. Their commitment to our outstanding young people and their appetite for improvement has been truly inspiring.

This work culminated in the school’s best ever outcomes last year and the Ofsted judgement of “Good” further serves to validate the course of action undertaken by staff and their work to date. To achieve these milestones within only a couple of years of our lowest point for outcomes further demonstrates how impressive and transformational the work of staff has been. To quote the report directly; “pupils now benefit from a good quality of education, day-in, day-out”.

The pupils too have had a huge role to play in the transformation of the school. I’ve mentioned this a few times in communication to parents, previously the expectations of the school hadn’t been aligned with the capabilities of our pupils and we knew we could challenge pupils to rise to improved expectations and standards. They’ve bought in to what we want to achieve at the school; they are an exceptional group of young people, capable of achieving great things.

It is pleasing to note that the Ofsted report notes what we already know about our pupils, “they feel safe in the school. They are confident and happy.” The report also cited that; “Bullying is rare. If this does happen, it is sorted out quickly.”

I am aware that from time to time there are social media posts about the school that perpetuate outdated or one sided points of view, often the school have no means of response to these nor the appetite to engage across these platforms. There are also a number of occasions when we know that parents haven’t contacted the school about the issues they raise on social media, when parents do get in touch we respond quickly and robustly.

We also understand that for some older pupils, they may not have been challenged as robustly as they are now when they were in lower school, as they were not held to the same expectations. For some pupils and parents, they are frustrated that we hold pupils to a higher standard than in previous years. It’s important to note that the school was not as successful when expectations were lower and I’d expect that most parents would want a school that is driving a positive climate for learning, rooted in high expectations – especially where pupils are capable of meeting these.

PART OF THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST | NURTURE | CHALLENGE | ACHIEVE

THE CHALLENGE ACADEMY TRUST C/O PRIESTLEY COLLEGE, LOUSHERS LN, WARRINGTON WA4 6RD. COMPANY NUMBER 10689247

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Principal: Mr J Carlin BA(Hons) NPQH





I would also like to thank parents and carers for their continued support over the last couple of years and for the kind words sent following the publication of the Ofsted report. Families play such an important role in helping us to support pupils in their academic and educational development; and close relationships with our families was a key driver in our decision to lower our pupil admission number from next September to 180.

Often schools will look to increase the number of pupils they admit to their school and our decision making does seem to buck that trend in this regard. We pride ourselves in knowing our pupils and having a strong community feel to our school, knowing our pupils helps us to offer them better support and this is a key feature of Penketh and our ethos.

We are committed to offering the best possible provision to our pupils, both in terms of the academic education that we deliver but also in relation to the wider curriculum that extends beyond the classroom. Since September 2018 staff have delivered a comprehensive enrichment programme that operates across lunchtime, with over 50 clubs for pupils to access to help them build passions for life, develop alternative skills and extend their classroom based learning. This built on our existing high quality creative arts programme and sporting teams that were already well established. This enrichment offer, along with our work around careers, was looked on favourably by Ofsted and is another facet of school life that we've significantly improved.

Whilst the news brings reason to celebrate for everyone connected to the school, the staff are undeterred in their pursuit of further improvement. Collectively as a school community we've done a huge amount in a very short space of time, but we will continue to drive forward in the pursuit of delivering better experiences for outstanding young people.

Whilst we issued a link to the Ofsted report to parents via text message and through our Twitter account on Friday, a copy of the report can be found on the school website and will be available on the Ofsted website from Friday.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Carlin.
Principal.

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