

Our Ref: PJS/DKP

6 May 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

As you may recall we had a short visit from Ofsted as we returned full-time to school. Thank you to all of those parents who completed the ParentView which informed their report. Unfortunately, the visit was just a short 'temperature check' rather than the big one which can change our designation, however it proved a useful marker to recognise our progress.

The premise of their visit is to check whether the school was providing an education during the current circumstances – short of us converting into a holiday camp over the lockdown I don't know quite how we could fail that – however it was a 'pass' or 'fail' and, unsurprisingly, we passed. This form of report doesn't grade the school in the usual terms, however once they had established that we were providing an education, they then had time to explore more fully the changes in the school, however a fair focus was on how we managed over the lockdown. At the end of the day the inspectors gave a 40 minute feedback of what they've seen, which was encouraging – although it's always a little underwhelming when it's boiled down to a short letter and lots of the best stuff has been left out.

The full letter is available on <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/23/116427>

The highlights are as follows:

- *'Leaders are resolute in their drive for improvement in all areas of the school. The positive impact of this work has been recognised by pupils, parents and staff. Parents who responded to Ofsted's Parent View were very positive.'*
- *'Any missed learning is being thoughtfully planned into the start of the summer term.'*
- *'The return to school has been handled sensitively, with well-being support provided when needed.'*
- *'The governing body shares the headteacher's drive and determination to improve the education of their pupils. There is clear evidence of robust decision-making and actions to strengthen the leadership of the school.'*

Every report highlights areas for improvement, although it's pleasing to note that they recognised that the areas they identified were already known to management – what you don't want is them to raise something you didn't realise needed brushing up. Our key points for improvement were:

- *To prioritise improvements to the provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.*
- *Ensure pupils who struggle with reading get the specific support they need.*
- *Fully implement curriculum improvements.*

In terms of these points:

SEN: we have started on some work around this and we will be asking parents of SEN students to complete a survey towards the end of the year so we can improve our provision. Lockdown has presented a challenge to some of our SEN students and we now need to optimise their achievement now they are back in school. We are going to focus on more proactive management of SEN students and ensuring that the liaison with parents is strong and they have some sense of empowerment over their education.

Improving Reading: we had a whole-staff INSET on this before the second lockdown, however the shift to remote learning has impeded our progress on that. We know that strong reading skills are critical to all learning – even in maths – and we have employed over-capacity in the English department next year in order to give us the ability to further support struggling readers.

Curriculum: this work is fairly advanced, however the inspector deliberately asked to speak to departments at different stages of development and then made a rather generalised statement based on this which isn't entirely accurate. However, we have done substantial work on the curriculum and we are very confident that in a full inspection it will be a strength of the school.

I can't help wondering where the school would be if we had not had those lockdowns and I'm sure we would have been in a stronger position however, all our outside inspectors and visitors are recognising the substantial improvements made, despite the disrupted year.

This term we have a few things in particular to focus on. We have clearly identified the teachers who are not teaching to the Aldworth standard and they will be supported to be better. All teachers are part of a planning training cascade to develop how they structure their lessons. We are continuing to push our agenda around inclusiveness, with work around diversity and anti-bullying to help the school be a kinder, more welcoming place.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we have the 'Summer of Fun' which offers a vast array of extra-curricular activities – to give students the interaction and 'extras' that they really have missed out on over the last year. The staff have really stepped up and we have an amazing array of choices from bicycle maintenance to crochet and everything in between! Please encourage your son/daughter to participate in these sessions because it's all those 'extras' that make school special, and I'm keen to maintain a strong extra-curricular offer next year, but if we have a poor uptake it will not be fair to ask teachers to plan and deliver for paltry numbers. To me, a healthy school is one where there is learning after the bell – not in the form of revision classes- but in all those other hobbies and interests that become the way we learn as adults.

The governors are in the process of appointing a Head of School who will run alongside me next year with the aim of taking on the school in their own right when I leave. This is to provide some stability for the whole community and to ensure a smooth transition. The interviews are next week, we have some very strong candidates and so I am very excited about this development and reassured that Aldworth will be set-up to continue the positive trajectory of late.

On a completely different note, we have had a letter from the local church, St Peter's in Pinkerton Road, about parents collecting students from their car park at the end of the day. They have a nursery on site and the parents are unable to pick up their children because Aldworth parents are blocking the car park, equally the church can't go about their business as they can't park in there either. I appreciate it may have been a routine some parents have got into, but it's important that we have good relationships with our neighbours so could I please ask parents who are in the habit of parking there to arrange an alternative stop to collect their child. I don't really want to have to station staff in the car park to speak to parents rather than supervising students safely leaving school – and I don't think any of us want to be in that embarrassing position of us having to speak to individual parents. Ultimately this is private land and the church would be in their rights to take further, more punitive means, in order to keep the car park free,

but I'm hoping that raising awareness of the issue and a polite request will be enough to solve this problem for them and the nursery users.

Finally, I'm pleased to announce that Aldworth is over-subscribed in Year 7 next year. This is really good because it shows we're 'on the up' and is a clear indicator of our increasing reputation within the community.

Thank you for your continuing support and let's hope we have an uninterrupted term of learning ahead.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Jenkins', written in a cursive style.

Mr P Jenkins
Headteacher