

To all Beckfoot Oakbank Families

18th January 2023

Dear Families,

I hope you are keeping well.

I am writing to give you an important update, following the outcome of our most recent Ofsted inspection which took place on 2nd and 3rd November last year. While Ofsted has judged safeguarding to be effective and highlighted areas of strength, including the quality of education within the Sixth Form, as well as the steps the new leadership team have taken so far to drive improvement, the overall outcome was 'Inadequate'.

We are deeply disappointed with the outcome of this inspection and the findings outlined within this report, but acknowledge the challenges facing the school, particularly following the return from lockdown. In recent months, the new leadership team have taken steps to address issues and they are entirely committed to ensuring the education at Beckfoot Oakbank is second to none and will be taking ongoing action to rectify all areas of weakness.

I have set out below, against each of the key areas within the report, the steps we are already taking, and will continue to implement, to improve on the areas highlighted by Ofsted.

Teaching and learning

Ofsted highlighted several changes that need to be made to the curriculum to improve teaching and learning, particularly in English and Maths.

How we will improve this:

- We are radically reviewing the Maths and English curriculums – creating specific interventions where needed to ensure all students, with a specific focus on Year 11, are able to catch up as quickly as possible.

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- As we move forward, we will continuously review learning practices to ensure they meet the high standard of education that we aim to deliver. Additionally, to ensure consistent improvement across the board, we have invested in bespoke training for teachers and staff in a range of subjects.
- A part of this plan is a specific focus on raising attainment. We are committed to providing extra support for all students in the lead up to exams. This includes providing a clear week by week learning plan across all Year 11 lessons that will ensure we meet our attainment targets. Students will also be provided with an 8-week subject revision plan for mocks and 12 weeks for final exams.

Leadership

The report highlights areas where Trustees should be working more effectively to challenge leadership.

How we will improve this:

The report recognises and praises the changes we have made so far to create a strong leadership team that will drive improvement and re-establish high expectations.

- We are pleased to see the report note that *“current leaders have the aptitude to improve the school”* and feel confident that this will be a turning point for Beckfoot Oakbank.
- As you are aware, in July 2022, we appointed a new very experienced Executive Headteacher, Jason Roberts, who is highly visible at Beckfoot Oakbank
- Jason takes over the line-management of the Headteacher of Oakbank, following the tragic passing of Jeremy Richardson in the summer.
- We appointed a new Headteacher, Liz Hart, in the summer term and she has already been leading our improvement strategy.
- To further strengthen the impact of this change, we will also be reviewing the capacity of our leadership team, to drive forward improvements in the quality of education.
- We have already recruited a new Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCO) and the Ofsted report has recognised the positive impact she has had so far, noting how she is working at pace to ensure the school is meeting the requirements of students with additional needs.
- At Trust level, we are further investing in our central improvement team, and we have appointed a Director of Professional Growth with an impressive background in school leadership, including leading whole school programmes of literacy.
- Furthermore, to support our Trustees we have put in place a new interim oversight committee, with leading sector specialists to help provide further assurance that our strategies are being implemented with rigour, clarity, and pace.

Behaviour

The report outlines a number of behaviour issues, inside and outside of the classroom, which cause disruption to learning.

How we will improve this:

- We are acutely aware of the concerns around behaviour. This has been a particular challenge as we have emerged from the pandemic and is an ongoing priority for us moving forward. The report has also recognised how we have begun to clamp down on poor standards of behaviour.
- A part of this is the introduction of our new 'ready to learn' expectations that will be strictly enforced. We expect all students to show up on time to lessons with immaculate uniform, no make-up, an appropriate school bag, equipment – including pen, pencil, planner, and ruler. Teachers and other members of staff will be regularly checking that students are meeting this standard of behaviour. In addition, we want to make it absolutely clear we have a zero-tolerance policy on anti-social behaviour in communal areas.
- In the circumstance that these standards are not being met we will be contact individuals' parents to set out a plan to ensure this does not continue. We will also be rewarding exceptional behaviour and those showcasing the high standard which we expect from all students.

Attendance

The report notes that attendance is too low at the school, with too many students missing lessons or arriving late. Poor attendance has a big impact on student wellbeing and attainment.

How we will improve this:

- It is imperative that your child attends school every day and is in each class on time and ready to learn.
- We are closely monitoring the attendance of each student and taking acting when there are unexplained absences.
- There will be a renewed focus and approach on reducing lateness to lessons, as this is not only detrimental to the individual but also disturbs the learning of others.
- Finally, to encourage students, we have introduced weekly recognition for those who have 100% attendance and no lates.
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To achieve this, we would greatly appreciate your support in encouraging your child to be at school every day and on time.

Literacy

The report also stated that more needs to be done to support students to read fluently, especially in helping those who need to, catch up.

How we will improve this:

We recognise that literacy ability is closely aligned with students' attainment and therefore, we have already made several changes to ensure we are improving literacy.

- As an immediate first step, we have introduced interventions to support literacy and have prioritised embedding reading throughout the whole curriculum.
- We will also use evidenced programmes to support students to improve their literacy ability and have invested in literacy specific CPD for staff.
- To ensure each student is offered the appropriate amount of support to improve their literacy skills, we will adapt our approach on an individual basis in recognition of specific areas for improvement. A part of this will be prioritising supporting Year 9 students who have faced increased disruption to their learning since 2020.
- Alongside these changes to the curriculum, we will also introduce a number of key initiatives to encourage students to read in their free time. This includes a peer to peer reading programme, as well as students in Years 7 and 8 reading during tutor time.
- We will be consistently reviewing and tracking the progress of students to ensure each target is met and every individual is leaving the school with a high standard of reading ability.

Whilst there are clear areas for necessary and immediate improvement, some of the positive findings in the report include:

- Inspectors praised the Sixth Form, noting it is “well run and well attended.” They also stated that “Sixth-form students’ exam results and destinations are impressive.”
- Students in the Sixth Form are “supported to develop their leadership skills and encouraged to develop levels of independence. They are offered high quality careers advice and they achieve well in exams and move on to appropriate destinations.”
- Inspectors noted that “many students enjoy school, and they recognise work has taken place to begin to improve standards of behaviour.”
- During the visit, Ofsted also noted how the new Headteacher had “already won the hearts and minds of staff. Current leaders have the aptitude to improve the school.”
- Students at the school have some positive experiences in the classrooms key Stage 3 students enjoy their art lessons and in “history a well thought through series of lessons helps students to develop a deep understanding of eras from the past.”

- The report also finds that, “across all year groups, an appropriate personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum is in place. It is well thought through.”
- Importantly, safeguarding is judged to be effective

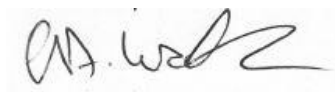
We are pleased to see Ofsted recognise the hard work that has led to our Sixth Form students accessing a great education. Over the coming months, we will be working incredibly hard to replicate this success across the rest of our school.

We want to reassure you we are taking the issues identified in the report incredibly seriously and will work tirelessly to improve these as quickly as possible. We are determined to make Beckfoot Oakbank a trusted part of the wider community and look forward to welcoming Ofsted back to the school in due course to see first-hand the positive changes we will have made.

We understand you may have some questions regarding the report, so we will be holding an information evening for families on Wednesday 18th January at 5pm, taking place in the main hall at Beckfoot Oakbank School. If you have any questions before then, please do email office@beckfootoakbank.org

We will continue to keep you updated on this journey of improvement within the school through the Headteachers blog and at key information evenings. Thank you as always for your ongoing support, understanding and cooperation.

Yours sincerely,



Shirley Watson

Chief Executive Officer, Beckfoot Trust