

Friday, November 4<sup>th</sup> 2022

## Response to OFSTED Inspection - Letter to Parents and Carers

Dear Parents and Carers,

Ofsted are now publishing their report following the inspection that took place on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> June. We wanted to write to you to share the outcome and reflect on some of the key comments inspectors made in the report.




The report highlights many positive areas and recognises improvements that are being made across the school since we joined Meridian Trust in October 2020. However, it correctly highlights that many of these improvements need more time to be demonstrated for all of our students and evidenced. The pace of implementation, and our ability to demonstrate the impact of recent changes has been hindered by Covid-19 disruptions and the fact that no official exam results had been published at the time of inspection.




While we know it will be disappointing, we believe the overall judgement of 'Requires Improvement' was right at this time. The feedback we received during the inspection reflected our assessment and highlighted that we are focusing on the right areas of improvement for Stratton Upper School to rapidly become the unquestionably 'Good' school we all want it to be.

That said, while we agree with the overall judgement, we do not feel the commentary of the report accurately reflects the strengths that inspectors saw and articulated during their visit. We can now confirm we did submit a formal complaint about what we consider to be the poor conduct of the inspection and the quality of the commentary in the report. Our aim was not to change a grade, but to draw attention to the very limited understanding shown for the school's context as an Upper School and the impact of the pandemic. At the time of inspection, 2 of our 5 year groups were on exam leave. Some of the comments relating to imbedding concepts into Year 9 were predicated on the prior learning of Years 7 and 8. It was this complaint process, along with OFSTED's own quality assurance systems, that delayed the publication.

We want to highlight the following positive comments in the report which reflect our assessment of the school and its current trajectory of improvement, and which is further reinforced by the significant reduction in the identified 'areas of improvement' from our previous 2018 report with 12 reduced to now only 2.

- The Sixth Form provision is 'Good'
- 'Staff have stronger subject knowledge, give clear explanations and check carefully what pupils know.'
- 'Leaders have ensured that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified and supported.'
- 'Tolerance in the sixth form is the norm and students are accepting of difference.'

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- ‘The positive work of the trust has resulted in notable improvements in areas such as finance and human resources. Although educational plans for improvement are in place, these are at different stages of development. As a result, leaders’ vision for a high-quality education is not fully realised in practice.’
- ‘Behaviour is generally calm and orderly’
- ‘Leaders ensure that thorough safeguarding procedures are in place.’
- ‘Pupils appreciate the services that support their well-being, such as access to counselling.’

Deeper feedback we received during the inspection that isn’t reflected in the report included:

- It was a pleasure to see a high level of challenge and students developing their knowledge across many lessons
- Questioning was used adeptly by many teachers
- Students are well supported through the curriculum
- The strength of teachers’ subject knowledge was praised in almost all subject areas

Unfortunately, this inspection took place before the summer examination results had been published. We were delighted with the attainment and progress of our students this summer, as you will have seen from our update earlier this week. Even allowing for the national increase in the pass rates, our results reflected a significant improvement on 2019 (the last full set of public examinations). Secure evidence such as this, along with the continued impact of our improvement plans, give us confidence that we will be welcoming Ofsted back shortly to a school they can confidently judge to be ‘Good’ or better.

As with so many sectors, the past two academic years have been very difficult for schools. For Stratton Upper School, the pandemic arrived at a time we were facing significant financial and operational challenges, leading to us joining Meridian Trust in October 2020. But our community deserves the very best; we recognise that improvements need to continue, and we will continue to focus our efforts on improving standards across the school this year. The identified areas align with our own priorities, and we already have plans well in progress to address these. We are sure that many of you will be keen to hear more about what we are doing and as such, we will be holding our first Parent Forum later this term with details on how to sign up to follow. The trust and school leaders would also welcome the chance to outline the progress we have made towards our aim to become an 11-18 secondary school, allowing us to work with students over a full five/seven years.

We want to thank all our parents and carers for your support. A school is built by a community working together for the benefit of its students, in partnership. We look forward to welcoming you back into the buildings after almost three years of distance as we navigated Covid protocols, so you can see first-hand the progress we are making along with enhanced opportunities to have your say.

A copy of the report is included below and will be available online [here](#).

Mr A Daly

Executive Principal

Mr E Kane

Academy Council Chair

Mr S Farmer

Principal