

27 April 2023

Dear Parent/Carer

Attached to this email is a copy of the inspection report from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023. Whilst the one-word judgement of ‘inadequate’ for the overall effectiveness of Teignmouth Community School, Exeter Road will be concerning for you as parents and carers, I would like to reassure you that the judgement has not come as a surprise to myself or my senior team and we have been working hard since September to make the changes needed here at our school – hence why the school has not been judged Inadequate in all areas.

During my interview process and on arrival at the school in September, students were keen to share their concerns around bullying with me. We acted promptly in response to this and it is encouraging that students told Ofsted that, while bullying does “sometimes” happen, “staff deal with it promptly” and that an “anonymous reporting tool makes (reporting) easier”. Unfortunately, bullies exist in all walks of life but it is vital that young people know where to go for help and have faith that action will be taken. Our work in this area will never be done, but it is great that we are making progress.

During the first six months of my Headship here, I had to focus almost solely on behaviour, attitudes and expectations. With my senior team, we made some necessary changes to the behaviour systems and procedures at the school and we were clear in our expectations of the students. Holding firm to these expectations, which in turn allows us to be relentlessly ambitious for our students, regrettably involved more frequent suspensions and a higher number of permanent exclusions than is desirable in any school. These decisions are always made with a heavy heart and are always a decision of last resort but, as a result of these difficult decisions and holding a firm line on behavioural expectations, Ofsted found that “defiance and extreme behaviours are infrequent” and pupils “behave calmly” which represents a huge improvement on where the school was last academic year. We will continue to make no apologies for having high expectations of our students.

It is a fact that the progress of young people at our school has been below average since at least 2019. All the research also tells us that young people with additional needs and those who are considered to be ‘disadvantaged’ perform disproportionately poorly when the quality of education is not good enough. On joining the school, my commitment was to address this inequality and ensure that *all* young people make good progress and leave with the qualifications they deserve. However, there is not a ‘quick fix’. The report

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acknowledges that we have begun the work needed to improve the quality of the curriculum and to raise expectations but this is a massive task and it takes time to see the impact of change. However, we have been working tirelessly to lay the ground work this academic year so that we can push on at pace from September.

I cannot disagree with any of Ofsted's judgements as they mirror my own, apart from the outcome for TCS6. Both the verbal feedback and the written feedback around the sixth form presents a positive picture: "sixth-form students are positive about their experiences"; "alongside a broad range of subjects, enrichment is well-planned"; "in the sixth-form, the PSHE curriculum is well-planned" and the lead inspector was very clear that the leadership of the sixth-form is strong. It is also a fact that outcomes at A Level are in line with the national average and performance in Applied courses is above the national average. It is, therefore, disappointing to receive a judgement of Requires Improvement but we do accept that the sixth-form is not an island and it is difficult for the inspectors to justify a 'Good' sixth-form within a setting that is, on balance, not good enough.

As I said at the start, the outcomes of this report come as no surprise to myself or my team and we will continue with our improvement agenda as planned. What the report does provide is a validated, third-party view of the school that ensures that all members of our school community have the same understanding. This will enable myself and my team to move at a faster pace than may have previously been possible.

Having said that, I completely understand how worrying this judgement is for you, as a parent/carer and so I would like to end by offering some assurance. This is not the first time that I have been faced with such a challenge: When I joined Dawlish College it had below average outcomes (similar to those here at TCS) and was judged as Requires Improvement by Ofsted (had they arrived 6-9 months earlier I am confident the judgement would have been Inadequate); within 18 months the students were making positive progress and leaving with the outcomes they were capable of and so, on Ofsted's return visit, they judged the school to be Good.

The attached report states that "leaders have a clarity about the improvement needed to bring change ... the work of new leaders is starting to take effect" and "staff are ambitious for change and supportive of the new leadership team". As with many things in life, getting the ball rolling is the difficult bit but, once moving, momentum gathers and the rate of change increases. We have now well and truly got the ball moving and the speed of improvement will increase from here.

Your children have my unwavering commitment. All I need from you is your support.

Yours faithfully

Rachel Wickham  
Headteacher