

Monday, 10 October 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Ofsted 2022 Outcome

You will be aware that Venture Academy has recently had its 'graded' Ofsted inspection. Thank you to all of you who were able to complete the parent view online before or at the point of inspection.

As you know, Venture Academy opened with MacIntyre as our sponsor in September 2020. However, due to the school maintaining the same Unique Reference Number (URN) that we inherited from 'Arden Fields' (with the South Warwickshire Academy Trust SWAT) we have been inspected at this time because Ofsted would view Venture as having been open for 4 years not 2. Under normal circumstances a new special Academy would be visited after being open for 3 years although we also know inspections are running about 3 to 4 terms behind in our region. I am giving you this background information to reassure you that our inspection was planned and expected and was not triggered by a concern or issue that had arisen.

I have been exceptionally proud to lead the Team at Venture since joining in 2020. Those of you who have been with the school for longer often tell me how far you feel we have come in that time. Equally, some of the feedback to Inspectors from more recent families joining Venture was wonderfully positive and again reminded us all why our work is so important. We had Inspectors on site for 2 days and they visited lessons, met with staff and pupils and listened to some pupils read. I met with the lead Inspector 4 times during the inspection to hear feedback on various things she and her colleague had heard, read and seen and again those meetings were both reassuring and overwhelmingly positive. Safeguarding was quickly identified as a key strength in our school 2 hours into our inspection.

However, the reality is that we are a school that had previously been closed for being inadequate, that was now 2 years into its development when our inspection took place. Although we have 'travelled far' and achieved much in that time our focus has been heavily around behaviour and attitudes and the personal development of our pupils. I was delighted to see those areas were rated as 'Good' by our Inspectors, as this is due recognition of the hard work of staff and pupils alike.

The main determining factor however in an overall judgement from Ofsted, aside from 'Safeguarding Pupils' is the 'Quality of Education'. The Inspectors did not feel that this was yet consistently good in our school and due to this we were graded as 'Requiring Improvement'. The 'Quality of Education' grade, our Inspector stated was inextricably linked to the overall effectiveness judgement for the school and consequently 'Leadership and Management' was therefore also given 'Requires Improvement'. We are currently recruiting for a new Assistant Principal for Teaching and Learning in order to make rapid improvements in this area of our provision.

Our overall outcome as 'Requires Improvement' is exactly in line with what our school self-evaluation said about us at the time of inspection. We knew we had made some great progress in the last 2 years, but that there was still work to do for us to be consistently 'Good' or better in all areas and it is reassuring that we were well aligned in our view to what inspectors saw, read and heard in their time with us.

An Ofsted report is about 450 words long and therefore does not reflect the full breadth of conversation and at times celebrate all we have achieved so far. The Inspectors, who I felt conducted themselves impeccably during their time with us, showed us a good understanding of the needs of our pupils.

However, I would like to draw your attention to some of the positive comments I was glad to see in the report that do reflect some of those discussions:

"Relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Pupils are well cared for."

"Leaders are ambitious for pupils and want them to be well prepared for their next steps."

"The school's work to support pupils' personal development is a strength."

"The Local Advisory Board and the Multi-Academy Trust Board are ambitious for the school. They know the school's strengths and what needs to improve."

"Parents are happy with the school and how it supports their children."

"The school has a strong safeguarding culture."

"Staff manage incidents of challenging behaviour quickly and calmly."

In terms of next steps for us as a school, we are reporting to Governors this week about our inspection and we are reviewing our school development planning document. However, as the judgements of Inspectors were in line with our self-evaluation, much of the work we need to undertake is already underway or planned. The 3 main areas to develop further are:

- 1) The sequencing of our Curriculum needs to be stronger and show more links across subject areas and Key Stages. This will ensure pupils build knowledge systematically over time. Inspectors felt that although we offer a good range of exam subjects, this was not purely what the Curriculum should focus on, as it builds over the years that pupils are with us.
- 2) Some teaching staff who are leading subjects (which is most teaching staff in our small school as we don't have 'Heads of Department'), need to have further professional development and training in those subject areas. This will enhance their subject knowledge to ensure it gives pupils the best opportunities for success.

- 3) Whilst behaviour was good overall, there are still some pupils who struggle to engage positively in all areas of learning, even if their attendance has improved significantly in their time with us.

We had already booked in 2 training days later this term to begin our Curriculum Sequencing Map, this will now be done jointly with Discovery Academy. There are more Specialist Teachers in subject areas at Discovery (due to the size of the school), which will help both schools to plan and moderate their provision in the Curriculum.

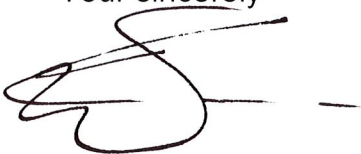
We expect Inspectors to return to Venture Academy 30 months from this inspection, We intend to spend the time before developing our Curriculum offer, embedding the opportunities for every child and investing in developing the talents of our teaching and class-based staff.

I believe this outcome to be a fair overview of where the school is in its' development from inadequate beginnings. It is always disappointing that the short report, does not fully capture the positive discussions with Inspectors, but I am pleased I was able to make clear to Inspectors the ambition, hard work and dedication of this Team and the resilience of our pupils. A school such as ours will always have its share of challenges, due to all that our pupils bring with them or have been through prior to arriving here; I am however exceptionally grateful for the Team here and all they do every day.

Our Governing Body here at Venture have also been through quite a journey with us to date and I am most grateful for their continued challenge and counsel as we move forward. They were responsive and available during the inspection too, which gave Inspectors great confidence in their relationship with us. I must lastly thank our pupils, who in the main conducted themselves brilliantly with Inspectors, showing the very best of Venture and spoke to Inspectors honestly and emphatically about their experiences with us – thank you all.

Please find enclosed/attached our final report, which will be published later this week by Ofsted. I look forward to reporting back to you all over the coming 30 months about what we are doing to further develop our school. We will be using the new newsletter format to share information with you as we go forward and of course meeting with you through reviews, coffee afternoons and focus groups. Thank you for your continued support.

Your sincerely



Emily Hopkins-Hayes

Executive Principal

