

1st February 2010

Dear parent / carer

Re: recent OfSTED inspection

As you are aware we were inspected recently by a team from OfSTED (the Office for Standards in Education). A copy of the full report is available on their website (www.ofsted.gov.uk) and we will also upload a copy onto our website. Paper copies are available in college for anyone who may wish to have one.

The findings of the inspection have been that certain areas have been judged to be “Good”, and others “Satisfactory”, with verbal comments passed on to us that many aspects either are or are close to being “Outstanding.” However, as a result of the limiting judgements with respect to certain aspects of the criteria of Teaching & Learning, the overall judgement, and other ancillary related outcomes, has been judged as “Satisfactory.”

The Inspection was under the new regime which was introduced in September 2009. There is no doubt that under the new regime the definition of all of the judgements have been raised, and without proper comparison with a wider sample of other school inspections, then to be judged satisfactory overall must be taken as delivering what is expected of the school in terms of improvements.

The workings of the new regime are such that the Inspector commented that the difference between the school achieving a “Satisfactory” and an “Outstanding” judgement was not as great as may appear, and is a credible objective for the next inspection. In conjunction with the school, the Governing Body has recently set achieving an “Outstanding” status within 3 years as its core objectives. It is pleasing to see that the Inspectors consider that to be within our grasp.

As you will see from the report there is much for us to be proud of and many strengths to be celebrated.

“Bassingbourn Village College provides a welcoming, friendly and safe environment in which students have good opportunities to develop the essential academic qualifications and personal attributes that prepare them well for the next stage of their education and later life. Standards of attainment have risen since the last inspection and are well above national figures”

Students in turn were praised for their behaviour and attitudes to work. “The students’ positive attitudes make a strong contribution to learning and to the school’s good ethos. Students routinely demonstrate responsibility by conducting themselves well, and have a mature approach to their own well-being and that of others; they are thoughtful and express their considered opinions very clearly.”

The inspection team also recognised the support of the Governing body and the efforts that the College has undertaken to manage effectively when faced with severe budgetary constraints. It was noted that significant success has been achieved in eradicating the college's budget deficit. The inspectors indicate that the college has a clear vision for its future development and has the capacity to improve further.

"The improvements secured since the last inspection demonstrate that the college has the capacity to improve further. The improvement plan articulates an ambitious vision for the college's future development, based on clear success criteria and appropriate priorities. The students' high attainment and generally good personal outcomes and the evidence of some excellent teaching demonstrate that the college has the potential to be a good or outstanding school."

Alongside the identified strengths, the inspectors also identified a number of key aspects that the College should act upon to improve further;

1. Improve the overall quality of learning in order to establish securely good progress for all groups of students by:
 - extending the outstanding features of teaching that already exist
 - increasing the proportion of good and outstanding lessons
 - eliminating the most obvious weaknesses and inconsistencies in teaching.
2. Strengthen the quality and impact of assessment by:
 - ensuring that marking is effective in guiding improvement
 - making more effective use of assessment information to plan and adapt work and learning activities in lessons to better meet the learning needs of individual students.
3. Make more effective use of the students' views in school self-evaluation, in order to strengthen provision and outcomes.

Quite clearly, it is vital that the College responds to these concerns in a thoroughly professional manner and takes action to address them as a matter of priority. It should however be noted, that even before the inspection, we had already identified these issues (as also indicated in the inspection report) and started to implement appropriate strategies to address them.

As part of our ongoing drive to improve standards, the College is in the process of preparing its strategic and annual development plan which will be carefully constructed to address known areas of weakness. The College will make this plan available to parents by the end of the Summer term so that you are fully informed about the direction we are taking and the plans we have to further raise standards by improving aspects of relative weakness.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of the OfSTED report or the College's response to it, please contact me at the College.

Yours sincerely



S Hudson
Principal