

16 February 2011

Dear Parent/ Carer

We underwent a full Ofsted inspection on 26 and 27 January 2011 and our inspection report will be posted on both the Ofsted and DACA websites on Thursday 17 February.

I enclose a paper copy of the report, including a letter from the Lead HMI Inspector to your child. I would encourage you to read the report and read the letter with your child.

In a number of respects, the judgement reflects the journey made since our previous monitoring visit inspection of March 2010 which reported on '*progress*' since opening in 2008. The summary judgement for this inspection now reflects the current level of overall *provision* against the present Ofsted inspection framework.

On reading the report, you will notice that although the overall judgements are the same, there are a number of areas that have now been graded 'Good' and you will also find many references to the improvements that have been made in the short time since our monitoring visit. We welcome the report and feel that it helps to determine the priority areas to focus on in coming years.

It is worth noting that the key judgements on areas of our work which the inspectors highlighted as 'Good' relate firmly to our students and to the community dimensions of our work and are:

- The extent to which pupils feel safe.
- Pupils' behaviour.
- The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community.
- The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
- The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being.

In addition, I would like to highlight the finding that teaching has improved during the last year and that around 50% of lessons observed were grade as 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.

The inspectors highlighted the following areas as needing to improve further:

- Raise attainment, particularly of the more able students, in the sixth form, and in English.
- Develop students' independence as learners by improving their basic skills, particularly literacy and oracy, and by increasing their readiness to be active participants in lessons.
- Adopt a systematic approach to improving the quality of teaching and use of assessment, ensuring inconsistencies are tackled and good practice shared.
- Improve the effectiveness of support for students who have special educational needs by clarifying what they are to achieve, ensuring teachers know and plan for their needs, checking stated support is provided, and involving parents and carers in drawing up and assessing students' progress against their targets.
- Build on improvements to strategic leadership by increasing the clarity with which the outcomes of monitoring activities and collation of assessment data are synthesised and interpreted to gauge the impact of actions taken, including at interim points, and to inform next steps.

Under the current framework, we would expect a full inspection to next take place in three years' time. Currently, around 40% of schools graded satisfactory undergo a monitoring visit in the interim period.

May I thank all of you who were able to return the Ofsted parental questionnaire, the responses are summarised in the report.

The 2011 inspection and report now provide us with a firm base to continue to improve outcomes for students and our work towards providing a first-class school for Darwen.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to remind you that the current term ends on Friday 18th at 3.15pm and re-opens on Monday 28th February 8.40am.

Yours sincerely

BRENDAN LOUGHRAN
Principal

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