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Head of School: Mrs K Collison  
Executive Head: Mr D Wry



HEARTS ACADEMY TRUST

Friday 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2024

Re: Ofsted Inspection - Waterman

Dear Parents,

We write to you now to inform you of the outcomes of our most recent Ofsted inspection, which took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of November, 2023. The school was inspected using Ofsted's very rigorous EIF (Education Inspection Framework), which was redeveloped in full in 2019; the framework is very robust and inspections are challenging; schools are graded in 5 key areas as well as their 'overall effectiveness.' The areas that are judged during school inspection are: the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, leadership and management as well as early years provision.

Inspectors gather a range of evidence to form their judgements, including lesson observations, discussions with staff (both school and trust staff), parent surveys, pupil voice and children's work. The inspection team highlighted many strengths in our setting and the report, as well as discussions had with inspectors, illustrated many positives which we should all be very proud of. These included (but are not limited to) the following:

- Pupils at Waterman Primary enjoy the many responsibilities and opportunities they undertake
- The school council make sure that pupils' voices are heard; pupils enjoy positive relationships with each other. They agree that school is an inclusive place
- Pupils undertake the HEARTS Promise, which provides a range of experiences they may not ordinarily have
- Pupils have confidence that staff will help them if they have a worry or concern; pupils build positive relationships with staff
- Children in the early years settle quickly into school life; staff develop children's communication and language skills well
- The curriculum is ambitious for pupils; it helpfully builds pupils' knowledge and understanding progressively over time
- Staff quickly address any misunderstandings so that pupils do not fall behind
- Children talk enthusiastically about authors they have read
- The trust's lead practitioners coach new staff on the best ways to teach the curriculum
- There is a comprehensive wider development programme in place. Pupils have a thorough understanding of fundamental British values. They also know how to stay safe online

Our school was graded as 'good' in all areas aside from the quality of education judgement, which then impacts on the 'overall effectiveness' grade, to which we were graded as 'requires improvement' for both.

We would like to share with parents and the wider Waterman community that we were extremely disappointed with not only these judgements but the process of the inspection itself. We have liaised with Ofsted and His Majesty's Inspectors



(HMIs) since, both in verbal discussion and in writing, by filing a formal complaint; this is the reason why there has been a delay to the publication of the Ofsted report until now.

While we do recognise that the school has areas for improvement, which we discussed at length with inspectors, we do not feel that the grades of 'requires improvement' in quality of education and overall effectiveness are an accurate representation of the school's position. We have since shared our views with the inspectorate. Our concerns with the inspection, to briefly sum, were as follows:

- That the inspection team was poorly prepared to review our school, with little to no knowledge of small schools as well as our school context
- That the conduct and professionalism of the inspection team was poor
- That there was a lack of adherence and fidelity to the inspection handbook; the correct and appropriate methodology was not followed and therefore we question the evidence base used to form their judgements

You may also be aware of the current climate as it relates to Ofsted and school inspections in light of recent events and national news; the inspectorate is experiencing a challenging time and inspectors are undergoing additional training; it is important to note that this training has taken place *after* our inspection – were it to have been in place before our inspection, it would have no doubt better shaped inspectors' views of our school.

We have attached to this letter our Ofsted report in full. The report can also be viewed at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/> in the coming days; we will also publish the report on our school website. The areas of improvement identified on the report are centred around provision for pupils with SEND needs, improving relationships with our parents and community, and addressing pupils' misconceptions in their learning. As you know, we have continued to work on these areas this academic year both before the inspection and thereafter, and we would be happy to illustrate the many ways we have progressed in these fields since. We would also like to point out the contradiction here within the report that stated (as previously mentioned), that "staff quickly address misunderstandings" and yet an area for improvement is for staff to "address pupils' misconceptions." This juxtaposition further speaks to our concerns about the inspection.

While the outcomes of the report are disappointing, it has strengthened our resolve to continue to provide what is best for the pupils and families to which we serve. Ofsted themselves remarked that, "*Trust leaders, governors and school leaders know what they need to do to strengthen the effectiveness of the school*" and we would like to reassure you that we are working tirelessly to this aim. We would also like to thank our entire Waterman community – pupils, parents and staff – who continue to work with great passion and enthusiasm to support our children; we are very proud of the team we have in our school and across our trust. We would also like to thank those parents and members of the community who supported the school during the inspection – either through a kind word or gesture, or speaking to the inspectors themselves.

Ofsted will now revisit our school, to carry out an inspection, within two years. We look forward to their return whereby will unequivocally demonstrate the strength of our school, community, parents and staff.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to speak to either of us. We look forward to continuing to work in ongoing partnership with you all.

Kind regards,



Mrs. K Collison (Head of School) & Mr. D Wry (Executive Head)