

Dear Friends

Happy New Academic Year! As our pupils returned to school this week, it was lovely to see them coming in with excited faces, pristine uniforms and equipped to tackle their learning with gusto. Thank you. In particular, we welcome our New Year 7 – I am already very impressed with their maturity and attitude. Well done to each and every one on a wonderful start to your new school.

As you know, we recently celebrated our GCSE results for Year 11 2017 which have improved yet again – despite the changes to the exams and results declining nationally!

	2015	2016	2017
Good Passes (grades 9-4) in English and maths	37%	53%	54%
Strong Passes (grades 9-5) in English and maths	10%	17%	30%
Achieving Ebacc	3%	9%	13%
5 or more strong passes (grades A*-B)	29%	32%	43%
5 or more top grades (grades A*-A/ 7-9)	11%	13%	16%

When I became Headteacher of Stretford High in September 2015, I knew that there was a big job to do to pull the school out of a period of decline which had seen a number of years of very poor outcomes for pupils. However, I also knew that the Stretford community was ready for the hard work and dedication to take on that challenge – I was not wrong. You will see a clear improvement trend above and I am particularly proud of the increase in the percentage of pupils achieving those higher grades. That was a real focus for us last year and staff, pupils and their families rose to it. Indeed, one of our year 11 pupils achieved **3** Grade 9s (Highest grade) in Maths, English Literature **and** English Language – one of only 2,050 pupils to do so in the whole country. Over half a million pupils sat exams last year so that puts our pupil in the top .04% nationally. I am so proud that we have pupils, staff and families who have worked hard and deserve those results. Together, we have grown stronger and stronger each year and I know we will continue to do so.

You do not have to take my word for it though. You will remember that we had a visit from Ofsted on the 7th & 8th June last academic year. The report from that visit has only just been released to us and will be available on the OFSTED website by the 13th September. However, the report is available now on our school website and a hard copy can be provided for you upon request. Simply email admin@stretfordhigh.com and we will forward in the post/email directly.

I am glad to say that the inspectors agreed with our own assessment that whilst we have made terrific improvements across the school, we know that we must continue to drive these improvements to get the best outcomes for our children and community. The team agreed with our judgements that Leadership & Management, Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare are all 'Good'. We also agreed that we will continue to improve to provide the best quality teaching and outcomes for our pupils. Overall, the school requires improvement. This may seem like a down grade from the good rating in 2013. However, in real terms, the school was in decline from that date, reaching crisis point in 2015. We have not just halted that decline – we have improved outcomes for two years running despite that fact that exams have become harder and national outcomes have declined in that time. We have bucked the national trend and improved.

The report itself recognises the school's many strengths:

- 'Governors are uncompromising in their expectations.'
- 'The new headteacher ... has a clear vision for improvement.'
- 'Leaders take their responsibilities extremely seriously, ensuring that a strong safeguarding culture exists throughout the school community.'
- 'Pupils have many opportunities to develop their leadership skills.'
- 'Bullying is rare in the school. Pupils say that when incidences of bullying occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school.'
- 'There is a strong culture of mutual respect that runs through the whole school.'
- 'Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain and the wider world.'
- '... a new behaviour management system has been introduced successfully. This has led to a marked improvement in pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons.'
- '...pupils behave well during social time to ensure a calm and orderly environment.'
- 'An effective curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils' well-being. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe, including how to manage online risks.'
- 'Leaders have introduced strategies to provide pupils with specific and more regular feedback on their work. The impact of these changes is that most pupils now make better progress than they have historically.'
- 'Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They are punctual to lessons and ready to learn.'

This year we will be working hard to make our school even better:

- Every child, in every classroom, will experience good or better teaching so that they can learn to the best of their ability.
- Our curriculum will take account of primary school learning and ensure strong continuous progress for all of our children.

- Our teachers will support and challenge our children to fully explain their ideas and promote deeper thinking with even sharper questions.
- We will continue to grow our children's literacy and numeracy skills, particularly in extended writing – so important not just for exams but for life in general.
- Every one of our children will be challenged by high expectations set by every member of staff.

As Headteacher, I am very lucky to have been able to recruit excellent practitioners – particularly our new Heads of Department who have already made a significant contribution to ensuring we have consistently good practice across the school. They will be continuing to drive up standards in their departments as well as growing as a team. Towards the end of last academic year, we made some additional appointments and I am delighted with the quality of teachers and support staff we have working hard for our children.

My favourite line in the report is 'Pupils are polite, courteous and demonstrate good manners.' I am delighted that the inspectors saw what I see every day: wonderful children who are kind and considerate. Children who are loved in school as well as out. Children who appreciate the education and opportunities they have and do what they can to make the world a better place.

If you have a query or wish to discuss our Ofsted report in more detail, you are always more than welcome to see me in school. Indeed, on Wednesday 20th September, I shall be holding my usual open office afternoon from 3.30-6.00pm and welcome any request to drop in for a chat. Please contact my PA Helen Adshead on 0161 876 1850 to make an appointment.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support and I look forward to seeing you throughout the year.

Yours sincerely,



Nicola Doward
Headteacher