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Mr J Muhammad LLB (Hons), PGCE

Executive Headteachers  
Ms H Foxworthy  
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**Gipsy Hill  
Federation**

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022

Dear Paxton Families,

We are writing to you with regard to the outcome of our recent Ofsted inspection.

Receiving feedback from Ofsted was difficult, particularly because there are elements of the judgement that we challenge, but, overall it reflected a fair judgment of our school.

The Governing Body of the Gipsy Hill Federation has set an ambitious vision for Paxton and this report serves as an important calibration point for our school, identifying areas where we can and should do more to realise that vision. Encouragingly, many of the focus areas Ofsted highlighted reflect our own understanding of improvement areas. As a result, we already have plans in place to address these gaps as we discuss in more detail below. While there are inevitably feelings of disappointment in recognising that more needs to be done to elevate standards at Paxton, we have been impressed by how our staff have embraced the challenge to continue to transform the learning experience here.

First and foremost, as school leaders, we are accelerating our school improvement plans to embrace new and creative ways to provide pupils with robust and engaging learning experiences, and to further forge a meaningful and transparent partnership with you, as parents. There are many strengths at Paxton for us to build on – the skilled and dedicated teaching and support staff, a sustained record of academic achievement and a strong school community, as was showcased at the recent Summer Fair.

We are fully committed to delivering on the changes required, ensuring that we use these strengths to provide the very best opportunities for all the pupils at Paxton Primary. To help you better understand the findings and also to give you confidence that the feedback in the report is being actioned, we wanted to share with you more about the wider context of our school and its journey as well as some of the steps we are taking to continue to improve the educational experience of our pupils.

## **Context**

Paxton's last Ofsted judgment took place almost 10 years ago and under an assessment framework that gave heavy weight to outcomes and pupil progress data. While that framework helped the educational community as a whole focus on data driven decision making, our historic judgment of Outstanding is reflective of a culture that focused on obtaining results. The new framework which came into effect shortly before the COVID pandemic, allows us to place greater emphasis on how those results are achieved, including through the development of a rich and varied curriculum and is aligned to the strategic direction set for our school by the Governing Body.

Since the last inspection, you will be aware Paxton has navigated a range of changes - from the expansion of the school to the significant impact the pandemic had on our community, including on our staff and leadership teams. Locally and nationally, there are also the challenges of falling pupil rolls across London (caused by falling birth rate, Brexit and the

impact of the pandemic) and the impact of the move to the National Funding Formula on school budgets.

We also recognise the impact that the pandemic has had on our pupils and their families. Social distancing restrictions have adversely affected social and emotional health and wellbeing. In addition, reinforcing substantive learning behaviours was a challenge in a remote environment and the return to a formal learning environment presented, in turn, its own challenges for many pupils. On return to in-person learning, we focused on re-building children's emotional literacy, learning behaviours and school readiness.

Despite these challenges, we remain committed to ensuring all pupils at Paxton Primary School receive the best possible educational experiences.

## **Our Strengths**

At Paxton we have placed a strong focus on reading, writing and maths and have worked hard to ensure that all our pupils at Paxton have secure and strong foundational skills. As a result, our pupils continue to make strong progress as reflected by the recent SATs results that exceed the national average in both reading and maths – 87% in reading (74% national); 85% in maths (71% national) and 71% reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (combined) compared to 59% nationally. In addition, we proactively took steps to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on our pupils by, for example, offering live learning during the pandemic.

We also have a committed and engaged community of parents and carers and hope to create more opportunities for you to participate more fully in your child's education and in the school community.

Finally and, most importantly, we have a dedicated, skilled and enthusiastic staff team who are passionate about making learning meaningful, engaging and fun. Their commitment to instilling a love of learning in all students is critical to enabling the success of the changes we will need to make to address Ofsted's feedback.

However, we very much acknowledge that there continues to be work which needs to be done to ensure that all our pupils benefit from the breadth and depth of our curriculum.

## **The changes you will see**

Many of the areas Ofsted identified as requiring improvement already formed areas of focus for us as a leadership team and actions were already underway to address these, such as:

- From September, students in Years 3 – 6 will receive weekly teaching of Spanish (as the modern foreign language). This will include teaching both of the written and spoken language. In Early Years and in Key Stage 1, pupils will engage in early language development opportunities, including singing, play-based activities and role play to introduce them to Spanish as well as other languages and cultures.
- Deepening instruction in science to ensure clear progress from the Early Years to Year 6. This will include a focus on the development of science investigation skills and the use of evidence in science.
- In Art & Design, pupils will benefit from increased opportunities to learn from and about works of art, including about artists and their different styles. They will also develop

and build on a range of artistic skills using different media, such as printing, sculpture, drawing and painting.

- Sharing more information with you about what your children are learning, the progress they are making and ways you can support them at home. For example, you'll see more parent workshops focused on helping you understand and reinforce phonics concepts at home. This is a key foundational skill to support early reading development.
- Continuing to enhance enrichment activities such as school trips, hands on learning opportunities in the community, sport and specialist music teaching. This will include real-life opportunities for pupils to contextualise their curriculum learning and therefore embed their knowledge and skills. Examples include: a) accessing key opportunities in the local area, such as using the local woods for field work in geography; b) developing partnerships with local projects and cultural organisations, such as the recent World Re-Imagined project; c) access to a full range of sports competitions, including developing intra-federation links.

In addition, we have already moved to a federated governance model through the creation of our Local Advisory Board consisting of parents, staff and members of the community. This will align school governance more closely with the community and expand the capacity of governors to serve as a critical friend to the Paxton leadership team.

We are committed to creating conditions where every Paxton pupil can thrive and become curious, confident and creative members of the community. While we are excited about these changes, we know that realising the benefits will take time. During this time, Paxton will receive support from a National Leader of Education, who will provide external scrutiny as well as advice and guidance. This will be in addition to ongoing school improvement advice and oversight from Lambeth.

You have shared with us a desire for greater transparency, communication and involvement in your child's education. To support this, we will begin regular half yearly parent forums from September 2022 to share our progress and learn from your experiences as members of our school community. Ensuring that the changes we are making are aligned to the needs and expectations of our families remains a high priority and this is our opportunity, as a leadership team, to go on this journey together as a community. The first Parent Forums will take place on:

Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> September 3.45pm with a focus on the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection

Friday 14<sup>th</sup> October 9.35am (following Parents Into Reading)

Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 9.35am (following Parents Into Reading)

We look forward to hearing from you and to updating you regularly on our progress towards achieving our ambition to become a truly outstanding primary school.

### **Next steps**

The next Ofsted inspection will be within the next 30 months. Our aim is to request for Ofsted to come sooner than this, so that the impact of the steps outlined above can be judged accordingly.

Paxton Primary School has always been and continues to be a special place with a wonderful community. We know that there is more work to do, but we also know that there are many strengths for us to build on. In partnership with the whole community, we are confident that we can achieve our goals for the school.

We thank you for the trust you put in us as a school every day and look forward to a continued and ever-improving partnership working with you.

Mr J Muhammad  
Headteacher

Ms A Thompson Ms H Foxworthy  
Interim Co-Executive Headteachers

Mr S Graham  
Local Advisory Board Chair