

Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Dear Parent/Carer,

School inspectors from Ofsted have released a report on our school following their visit on the 8th and 9th February 2023. Their judgement is that the school is “inadequate” and needs improvement in particular areas. We accept, and take full responsibility for these findings, and would like to apologise to you and your family.

This is a critical report, but I welcome it because it highlights issues we are already acting on and reinforces our wider plans to provide the effective and enriching education that all our students deserve.

As you know, we have made significant changes at school since the inspection, including my own appointment as Executive Principal. I can assure you that my team and I, with the support of our Trust, are committed to making the changes needed to ensure that UTC Reading is, once again, recognised as a good and high-performing school.

With your help, and that of our students, I am confident we will get there. For those of you who would like to read the full report, you can access it via our website [here](#). However, I wanted to take a moment to outline the actions we have and will take to address the feedback Ofsted has given us.

## Safeguarding

It is crucial that students feel safe at school, that they know any concerns will be listened to and acted upon every time, and that the behaviour of all students supports a positive, safe learning environment. We appreciated that OFSTED confirmed our systems and processes were thorough, but were deeply concerned to hear the feedback from the inspection and have taken significant actions already. These include an external consultant visiting with all students, who has confirmed that all students have at least one adult they would be confident to report concerns to. We have held assemblies with students and have introduced additional lanyards for safeguarding lead staff to wear so they are visible to students. We are also launching the ‘Speak Up Speak Out’ campaign that I mentioned to you in my last letter and are putting posters around school showing students who to report concerns to. As well as this, we are working with the Student Board on developing a charter, which we will launch in the summer term, and I will write to you with more information about that then. Finally, we will continue with our external support to further review our safeguarding processes and continue to retrain all staff. Gaining students’ confidence in this area will take time, but we are determined to succeed.

Additionally, the report mentioned allegations made about a small number of staff members. We have taken these very seriously, taking action even while the inspection was happening, and are working with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to investigate and resolve these. It does of course mean that we have more temporary teaching staff in school while this has been happening, but it’s necessary during this time.

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### Schools

- The Bicester School
  - Theale Green School
  - UTC Heathrow
  - UTC Oxfordshire
  - UTC Reading
  - UTC Swindon
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## **Behaviour**

As I mentioned in my previous letter, behaviour and dress code are the foundations for an atmosphere and environment where students feel safe and can learn effectively. We have updated both our [behaviour](#) and [dress code](#) policies already, including the consequences for poor behaviour and language. I would like to reiterate how important your support is in helping us reinforce these policies, and as part of that, we will be sharing resources with you in our newsletters that will help you have these conversations with your child.

Additionally, we are reviewing our Personal Social, Health and Emotion curriculum, and are bringing in external agencies to help us develop and deliver this to ensure that all students understand what appropriate behaviour looks like. Elements of this form part of our 'Speak Up Speak Out' campaign mentioned before.

## **Attendance in Sixth Form**

Attendance is not high enough in Sixth Form, so our focus here is on understanding the barriers to attendance, and then on working with students to overcome these and ensure they see the benefit of being present in every lesson. Having consistent teachers forms part of this, and while, as I mentioned above, we have some continued short-term challenges here, it is a major priority for me to deliver consistency in this area. I would again really appreciate your support in reinforcing the importance of attending every lesson with your child.

## **SEND**

Our support for students with SEND is not effective enough, and we have recruited a new SENDCo, who starts with us after Easter. Their priority will be a complete review of our SEND policies and practices, including the support strategies teachers use with students. Additionally, we will have an external review in the summer term to identify the progress made and support further improvements. I will share our SENDCo's contact details once they are in post with the parents and carers of those with SEND, plus of course they will be available on our website.

## **Conclusion**

While we are of course disappointed in the report's findings, it is important to remember that the inspectors found that many pupils enjoyed the STEM subjects and the emphasis placed on preparing them for the world of work, and that our ambition for all students, including those with SEND, is to achieve highly. They also praised our careers support and the wide range of clubs available at school.

However, let me repeat my determination to resolve the issues that Ofsted has highlighted. I have no doubt that you will see rapid progress in the way we operate and support our students over the coming months by working together in partnership with you and your family.

I appreciate that the report, and all the information contained in this letter, represents a significant amount of change in our school, and would therefore like to invite you to attend a virtual presentation from myself, Jo Harper, CEO of our Trust and Jax Snipp, Head of School, on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April between 5 and 6pm. Please [click here](#) to join this event. This will be an opportunity for you to hear us talk more about all these important topics and ask questions. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible then.

We will also be running some additional events next term; these are designed to be working sessions where parents can get involved in supporting the improvement of the school. I will send

more details of how to sign up for these sessions when we return next term, and also discuss them further on 18<sup>th</sup> April.

If you have any questions you'd like us to answer in the meantime, please [complete this form](#) and we will come back to you. We will aim to do this within our usual 48-hour turnaround time, but please bear in mind this may be longer if we receive many questions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "W. Edwards".

Wayne Edwards  
Executive Principal  
UTC Reading