

20 September 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to update you on some correspondence that the College has had with the Education Inspectorate, Ofsted, over the past few months.

In July, the Regional Director agreed, at our request, to come and meet with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors in College, this step in itself was unusual. The purpose was to discuss wider sector concerns about Ofsted, the inconsistency and variability of how it worked and ways in which that might have impacted the College. The meeting was empathetic and constructive. It has now resulted in a letter from the Regional Director to clarify his understanding of Heathfield's achievements and value to the system. This is also extremely unusual practice and shows a genuine step to acknowledge the College's concerns.

The letter is available on our website but the core points are summarised here, including but not limited to the fact that examination outcomes and the quality of education were not, at the time, considered equitably to other more recent inspections. The letter states:

"While not being appropriate to make direct comparisons between different schools, I can certainly reflect that 2023 published examination outcomes for Heathfield and for other local schools judged to be outstanding are similarly high. These outcomes reflect the areas of real excellence that are identified in Heathfield's inspection report from May 2023."

The letter also acknowledges the "context" around the 2022 published performance outcomes which, due to decisions made by the Department for Education during the Covid period, did not include students' Year 10 GCSE results from 2021 in College data and therefore created a false picture of student achievement. Whilst they were unable to directly contradict the original report, it is as supportive a response as we could have expected and one that actively recognises the College's ongoing excellence, which was already recorded as 'Outstanding' in most areas.

Furthermore, following the recently announced changes in Ofsted's approach to grading and inspection which removed single word judgements, an invitation has been extended for the College to "be involved in any reviews and development of the inspection framework".

We believe this models the positive outcomes of College approaches to raising issues constructively, being clear to ensure inequity is challenged whilst remaining solutions focused. It will place Heathfield Community College in an advantageous place to understand any new approaches and be a part of shaping that change for the best interests of students, staff and parents.

Thank you for your on-going support.

Yours sincerely



MS C BARLOW
Headteacher



Tel: (01435) 866066 e-mail: office@heathfieldcc.co.uk

Cade Street, Heathfield, East Sussex, TN21 8RJ Website: www.heathfieldcc.co.uk

Headteacher: Ms Caroline Barlow B.A. (Hons)