

4th January 2024

Dear all,

Please find attached the outcome of our recent OFSTED report. This not the outcome we hoped for, or we feel we deserve.

While I do not dispute that there are areas which we need to improve on I personally feel the main thrust of the inspection, and therefore the report, does not fully capture main reason we exist which is to: support personal development; nurture relationship; and meet the students where they are.

I feel strongly that the whole process did not consider how fragile any progress and engagement in academic learning is for our students. To say "The school has prioritised pupils 're-engagement with education, however, once this is established, the school does not build on this with enough rigor around academic success" fails to recognise the damage and trauma which can be caused by maintaining pressure on academic success when students already perceive they have failed.

Since the last inspection all students have left with formal qualifications, however, we do need to ensure that all subjects are delivered in a way that best suits the individual.

We represent 0.23% of EHCPs in Devon and 1.75% of EHCP's in Independent Schools. I take from this that we are doing something very different and very niche, and based on parental and student feedback during the inspection and what was seen by inspectors this is something we do very well and are very proud of.

It is also important to note that only one element has been identified as inadequate. However, it means that it is the highest grading we could currently get. It also means that Leadership and Management also must be inadequate despite the fact many elements of the school were recognised as good.

While I fundamentally refuse to change our primary focus away from this or move away from our core values to meet a centrally set framework, I will always strive to be better and accept the actions highlighted provide a structure to this.

We have already taken steps to bring all elements of our offer up to the same standard. These include the appointment of a new full-time English teacher (starting in March 2024) to increase the number of directed learning hours, new recording systems to capture the learning that is taking place and new internal structures to ensure that scrutiny of our own practice is rigorous and thorough.

It is my job to make the framework fit Running Deer School rather than the school fit the framework. This will take an approach of self-reflection, listening and adapting, and acknowledging what we do well but what we also need to improve on. If every section of the education system from the Department of Education, Ofsted, local Authorities to Caseworkers, teachers and volunteers took this approach then we wouldn't be seeing the issues was see across all schools around the country.

If you would like any more information or to discuss this further, please get in touch.

Nick

Running Deer School
Butterdon Wood
Moretonhampstead
Devon
TQ13 8PY