



Tarleton Academy celebrates successful Ofsted report which recognises “rapid and sustained development” and “Outstanding” leadership and management.

Tarleton Academy was inspected on 4th and 5th December 2014, under the latest and increasingly demanding Ofsted framework. The school was delighted to be told that the programme of ‘rapid and sustained development’ over the last three years has brought them to within a whisker of an overall outstanding judgement. Although this was limited by historical data that was not quite outstanding yet, it was acknowledged that the Academy was very close to realising its ambition.

When Lesley Gwinnett was appointed Headteacher in September 2011 she set in place what Ofsted have now described as ‘an uncompromising agenda for improvement’ with ‘high expectations for staff and students’. Mrs Gwinnett explains:

“In September 2011, we were a school that needed a good shake up to get us where we should be. Over the last three years there has been significant advancement in many key areas including leadership at senior and middle level, standards of teaching and learning, the now excellent behaviour of students and the fantastic progress they are subsequently making. There were a number of crucial ‘legacy’ issues to address but we are now confident that on a day to day basis we are a thriving, enthusiastic, skilled and committed staff who enjoy really positive and fruitful relationships and outcomes with our students, their families and the wider community. With the high calibre of students of all abilities that we have at the school, this is as it should be.”

The Ofsted report states that ‘Since her appointment, the headteacher has reviewed all areas of academy policy and practice. She knows the staff and students well and recognises what still needs to be done to improve’. It goes on to say that ‘inspection evidence shows the progress of students currently in the academy is continuing to rise because leaders and managers have set much more demanding targets for progress and achievement’.

Ofsted also praises the leadership of teaching, describing it as ‘outstanding’ because in recent years senior leaders have tackled issues in teaching rigorously and successfully. This had meant an initially high turnover of staff which has led to a significant improvement in the quality of teaching. This is now recognised as consistently ‘good and outstanding teaching’ on a daily basis.

Maths, English, Science and PE are all recognised as strong subject areas, and the report acknowledges that the school has had to tackle the ‘legacy issues’ in some other subjects. However the ‘newly energised leadership of those subjects’ is now bringing about much improved progress for students across the board and at all levels. The academy is also increasingly ambitious in its expectations of students who are now studying more academic GCSE’s. More students study Double and Triple Award GCSE science, both English Language and Literature and a modern foreign language than ever before. Computer science has also been successfully embedded and initiatives such as the introduction of a nurture class in Years 7 and 8 have improved some students’ basic literacy and numeracy skills significantly. Middle ability students have specifically been a focus of the school’s

development plans prior to the inspection and the strategies already being employed by the school were commended.

Ofsted also praised the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its students as 'outstanding' and noted that 'thoughtful planning' has ensured an increasingly positive impact upon the attitudes of students towards their education and towards life in a multi-cultural society. Inspectors also commended the vertical tutoring and House system 'which brings together students of all ages certainly helps to develop a caring community'.

In the feedback received via the Ofsted website during the inspection, parents' views were very positive and the school was humbled that some parents also took the time to insist on speaking to the inspectors to express their overwhelming appreciation for all that the school does for their children. Inspectors concluded that parents clearly 'recognise the current improvements being made at the academy and the positive impact this is having'.

The governance of the academy has also been recognised as outstanding. Mrs Gwinnett is grateful to the Governors for their ongoing support but particularly the genuine challenge that they provide. The Governing body at the Academy has a significantly high proportion of parent Governors and this is also important to the Headteacher who noted:

"We are very privileged to have such honest, open and intelligent representation on our Governing body so that we can appropriately respond to informed feedback from and with our parents".

Chair of Governors, Mrs Helen Dicker, who has had three children pass through the school, with another a current student, says:

"The changes in the school over the last three years have been astounding and I am delighted that the current generation of children in the school are reaping the rewards of all the hard work that has gone into making it such a superb environment in which to learn and develop as happy, well rounded young people."

At a time when schools and the teaching profession are regularly under increased scrutiny, the school was encouraged by the many strengths noted in the report and galvanised to continue in its quest to ensure that they provide, as their strap line suggests, 'outstanding education at the heart of the community'.