

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am delighted to be able to share our final Ofsted report with you following our inspection in July. As a school, we are incredibly pleased with the report and, most importantly, pleased that the inspectors were able to see Howes for what we know it to be; a wonderfully inclusive, community-orientated school where children and families belong, are valued and are able to thrive.

There is so much within the report that makes us incredibly proud. Ofsted judged both Inclusion and Personal Development and Wellbeing as meeting the Strong Standard, meaning that practice in these areas is above the standard expected. Inspectors recognised that pupils from all backgrounds feel “welcome, valued and part of school life” and that pupils with SEND and other barriers to learning typically achieve well. They also recognised the thoughtful way in which we support disadvantaged pupils and the inclusive work of our Hearing Resource Base.

Our Personal Development and Wellbeing provision was described as a “significant strength of the school.” Inspectors highlighted our ambitious personal development programme, pastoral support, pupils’ understanding of how to keep themselves safe, their knowledge of British values and the many opportunities they have to develop responsibility, leadership and a genuine voice within school. They also noted that parents describe Howes as “the heart of the community” – something that means an enormous amount to us.

The report also recognises the progress that the school has made academically. Key Stage 2 outcomes have improved over the last two years, pupils develop appropriate knowledge and skills across a broad curriculum, pupils with SEND achieve well and children leave Howes prepared for the next stage of their education. Inspectors recognised our strong focus on spoken language and reading, skilled phonics teaching and the love of reading that has developed across school. They also described our wider curriculum as “thoughtfully designed and ambitious”, with teachers bringing learning alive and capturing pupils’ imaginations.

Our Early Years team should also feel extremely proud. Inspectors saw a purposeful, nurturing atmosphere, with warm and trusting relationships, an engaging and well-designed curriculum and children who are safe, happy and developing independence and positive attitudes to learning.

I was particularly pleased that inspectors recognised the commitment of our staff and leaders to the children and families of Howes. The report describes the school as welcoming and notes that families see Howes as “a safe haven”. It also identifies the strong culture of trust and collaborative learning amongst staff and the commitment of leaders to improving outcomes and removing barriers for children.

You will see that Attendance and Behaviour are judged together within the inspection framework and this area has been identified as Needs Attention. I think it is important to explain this clearly. If you read the behaviour section of the report independently, it is extremely positive. Inspectors say that pupils “behave well and are proud of their school”, that the atmosphere is “calm and purposeful”, that pupils treat one another with kindness and respect, and that bullying happens infrequently and is dealt with quickly and effectively. They also describe our children as polite and courteous, safe, secure and cared for.

Unfortunately, it is our overall attendance that has resulted in this combined judgement. Attendance at Howes remains below the national average and, although inspectors recognised the detailed work that school carries out with families and acknowledged that there are signs of improvement, that improvement has not yet been sustained for long enough. This must now be something that we

improve together as a whole school community. Every day in school matters. We will continue to support families wherever there are genuine barriers to attendance, but we also need everyone to help us make attendance at Howes the very best it can be.

So please spread the word about Howes. Tell people what you love about our school. Tell them about the care, the opportunities, the inclusivity and the sense of belonging that inspectors saw so clearly. The report says that pupils are “extremely proud to belong to this highly inclusive school” and recognises the vital part that Howes plays within its community. That is something worth shouting about.

I would like to say a huge thank you to all our parents and carers for your continued support and particularly to those who completed the Ofsted survey or spoke to inspectors during the inspection. Your comments and support were greatly appreciated.

My greatest thanks must also go to our wonderful staff. They continually go above and beyond for the children of Howes, and I am incredibly proud of the care, commitment and dedication they show every single day. The report recognises how well staff know our children, how quickly they identify when support is needed and how effectively pastoral care is woven throughout school life.

And finally, to our children, you were amazing. You spoke confidently and proudly about your school, demonstrated our values through your actions and showed inspectors exactly what makes Howes special.

Having had the privilege of being Headteacher at Howes for the past five years, I could not be prouder of the progress our school has made. There will always be things we want to improve and that is part of our commitment to continually Be the Best You Can Be, but this report gives us a wonderful opportunity to stop for a moment and celebrate just how far Howes has come.

Thank you, as always, for being part of our Howes family and for helping to make our school the very special place that it is.

Mrs Cook
Headteacher