



Falmer High School

Newsletter – March 2010



Dear Parent/Carer's and Students

Publication of the Ofsted Report following our February Inspection

Following the recent publication by Ofsted of our latest Inspection Report, I am delighted to be able to write to you with a summary of the headlines from that Report. You can download a copy of the full Report by clicking on the link on the Falmer Website: -

(<http://www.falmerhighschool.co.uk>) or by going to the Ofsted homepage (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>).

To our delight, the headlines are that Ofsted sees Falmer as a strongly improving school that not only provides a satisfactory standard of education but is rated as 'good' in 13 key areas. There is no doubt that our recent inspection has led to us receiving the best Ofsted Report in the history of the school. This will provide an excellent foundation upon which the new Academy can build on in September.

You will be pleased to know that the Inspection Team observed that student behaviour around the site was orderly and that students enjoyed their lessons. Indeed, the 'rich and impressive range of courses' on offer to older students was singled out for praise. As well as pointing to the strongly improving attainment and noting that learning and progress are good, Inspectors singled out and rated as being good:

- The school's capacity for sustained improvement
- The quality of pupil's learning and their progress
- The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress
- The extent to which pupils feel safe
- The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles
- The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that contribute to future economic well-being
- The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs
- The effectiveness of care, guidance and support

- The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement
- The leadership of teaching and learning
- The effectiveness of the Governing Body
- The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being
- The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination

The Inspection paid tribute both to the strength of the Leadership Team and the Governing Body in this critical year in which the school journeys towards becoming an Academy, saying that the focus of senior staff in supporting teachers is driving substantial improvement.

The Lead Inspector has written to our students saying, 'Thank you all for welcoming me and my four colleagues to your school on 3–4 February. We found the overall effectiveness of your school to be satisfactory, with a number of good features. During the two days we spent at your school we visited many of your lessons, met a number of you, looked at your work, and looked at questionnaire responses from a cross-section of year groups. Throughout the inspection we were impressed by your positive attitudes. A particular highlight for us was our visit to your catering dining room and to be served excellent food cooked by senior students. You told us that you develop good personal qualities, have a wide range of opportunities to take on additional responsibilities and receive good support, and we agree.'

As Headteacher, I would like to take this opportunity to thank those parents who contributed by returning their confidential questionnaires to the Inspection Team. I thought you would be interested in the following summary as it represents a huge vote of confidence in the school. Of those who responded:

- 82% agreed that their child enjoyed school
- 87% felt that the school kept their child safe
- 76% felt that their child made enough progress at school
- 78% thought teaching is good at the school
- 73% felt that the school helps parents to support their child's learning
- 80% believe that the school makes sure their child is well prepared for the future
- 76% judge that the school meets their child's needs
- 73% think the school is led and managed effectively
- 80% of parents say they are happy with their child's experience at the school

Other highlights of the Report itself are that:

- Students perform well in English and Mathematics
- Older students develop good vocational and employability skills
- Very nearly all students progressed to further education in 2009
- The moral and social development of our students is good
- Alongside strong teaching our teaching assistants are 'a very valued strength of the school' and help students 'make good progress'
- Extra curricular clubs and learning groups are well supported.
- Arrangements to support students as they transfer from primary schools to Falmer, and as they move into Year 10 and then on post 16 are good.

Of course, although Falmer is improving strongly there is more to do and we will be working hard on the 3 key issues Ofsted have asked us to look at:

- Remove inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and assessment so that all teachers: a) consistently apply the school's systems and processes so that they use high quality feedback and guidance evident in the best lessons to help students know what they have to do to improve, and b) provide all groups of students with more challenging targets (see KI 4.1 above).
- All subject teachers to focus on improving literacy levels in their lessons (see KI 1.3 above).
- Implement fully the school's community cohesion action by developing stronger links with regional areas of the United Kingdom.

I have been very proud to have been leading Falmer at such a watershed period in its history and am thrilled with the outcomes from this Ofsted Report. This is a well-earned outcome as we are not merely a 'satisfactory' school, but are strongly improving and have been acknowledged as being good in so many crucial areas. The Governors, staff and I are determined to ensure that standards continue to rise so that our students get the very best start to their adult working lives and have the qualifications they need to go on in education or training. This is a brilliant platform upon which the new Academy can build, and I expect the new school to continue to go from strength to strength as a result both of the great legacy it will inherit and the new opportunities and impetus that the new buildings and fresh start will give. I am privileged to have worked with staff who are second to none and who are strongly focused on helping students develop personally and to achieve academically at the highest standards possible. Parents and students can now have every confidence that the new Academy based on Falmer's achievements will go from strength to strength.

Lauren Atallah
Interim Headteacher

