



Thoughts & reflections on FSG

Comments from Students, Parents
& Staff



From a PGCE student (July 2020)

In part, this is a quick note to say 'thanks for having me', as my PGCE year comes to an end, and so too my time at FSG.

As I go, I want to commend Matt Bates, Emma Field and English departmental colleagues for all the support and time they have so generously given me in what turned out to be a somewhat unorthodox (!) training year. I could not have asked for more. They have helped me in many ways they know, and in many ways they will not.

I also want to say a bit more. Although at an early stage in my career as a teacher, I've made my way around a fair few schools and educational institutions in my time, and I feel I should leave you with the following thoughts and impressions of FSG:

Your school is extraordinary. Your staff are brilliant. Your students are among the most inquiring, generous, characterful I have ever had the pleasure of teaching. The culture and ethos of your school is so deeply human in nature. I can think of no higher compliment.

Alongside some very experienced educators who know much more than me, I've recently finished work on a book that suggests schools adopt broad, holistic approaches to 'character' and 'cultural capital' in order to properly address what those concepts really mean. This is necessary not just to satiate Ofsted, but to do right by our students. If we are to prepare children for all that comes with the 'art of living', the development of intellect and character must be bound together.

You and FSG colleagues need not read any of it. You do all of it already, and infinitely more. In my view, FSG is a model for everything a school should be, and everything a curriculum should do. It is truly, in every conceivable sense of the word, outstanding.

I have been totally inspired by my experience this year, your staff, and your students. I will be forever grateful that I was able to spend such a formative year in such a setting. It has been an honour to be a very small part of it for a very short time.

FSG – Thoughts and reflections from our students, our staff and our parents

1. At this time of uncertainty (corona virus), the present future of schooling is uncertain, and for many, rather scary. And yet, the true test of a leader is how they rise to master the moment when it arrives. Our principal leads by example, supporting students, staff, and parents; no one is left behind, and everyone pulls together for a common goal. When challenges come, society looks for heroes; FSG has hundreds, all willing to serve the community, and all led brilliantly. The ethos is teamwork and is nurtured every day, and when our capacity to cope with a challenge arrives, we look around us, see a friend and find a team.

2. Our school cares deeply for the well-being of all pupils; this is clear immediately on walking into the school - an environment that not only supports the girls academically but also their well-being and mental health. The friendly, purposeful supportive buzz about the place is palpable.

But, at the heart of this ethos is how the school values and supports the staff. One of the mottos of our principal is, as on an aircraft, to 'place the oxygen mask on yourself before helping others who may need your assistance'. Whilst we champion the idea that children come first, leaders also understand that this does not mean staff come second and that instead it is the teachers who deliver day in, day out and who put those children first. In my previous school when my first daughter was born with a condition I had to take time off work to look after her. I was disciplined for the time off, had to send photos of doctor's appointments, prescriptions and even photos of my daughter to 'prove' she was ill. At FSG, when my daughter fell ill again, a markedly different approach from the leadership – as illustrated by this email from our principal

'I have seen the emails you have sent across proving ^s rash and justifying your time off work. Please don't feel that you need to do this. We totally support you and know just how hard you are working. We also know that you have a young family and that children get sick – and that that often happens at the most inconvenient times. You are a truly valued member of the FSG family and as such we appreciate that you have other responsibilities and that sometimes you are needed elsewhere! If there is anything we can do to support you, just keep asking; Hope ^ gets well soon'

This care extends to all staff and so retention/engagement/support from staff and therefore consistency and opportunities for the girls are over and above most schools. Outcomes are therefore exemplary.

3. Our school goes above and beyond the academic. We have created time and space in which the pupils have access to amazing opportunities that develop leadership skills, promote personal well-being and enhance the inter-personal skills needed to thrive outside of a school setting. My primary role at the school is to embed, expand and manage the adventure education department; pupils at our school will not only be able to leave with outstanding academic grades under their belt, but a variety of other nationally recognised qualifications such as the Mountain Bike Leader Award, the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award, The Junior Archery Leader Award and even the NICAS personal climbing skills award. Our school is ahead of the game when it comes to educating the next generation and personally feel extremely valued as a member of staff here.

4. During the school's Carol Service in 2019, between the beautiful music and bible readings, we heard a short piece about evacuated students, among them our own girls, facing their first Christmas away following the onset of World War Two. We learned about the bravery and courage of the staff and girls and their resilience in times of adversity as they moved to the safety of the countryside and started a new school at Cyfartha Castle in Wales. Who could possibly have imagined that just three months later, with COVID-19 and a national lockdown our modern school community would once again face similarly life-changing events? The students then dealt with the new world in which they found themselves with calmness, purpose and even a spirit of adventure. They made the most of their new surroundings and tried to keep life as normal as possible. Eventually, the threats they faced were overcome and they returned from their sojourn in Wales with newfound strength and conviction. In the last few weeks, as we prepared to pack up our own school, and encounter new ways of learning, this time online from the safety of our homes, I was taken aback by the fact that the qualities which made the students of the 1940s so remarkable, were still evident in the young people at our school today. The courage, the positivity, the determination to carry on and the enormous kindness they exhibited in their daily lives was plain for all to see. I was also deeply impressed by the

calmness shown by the staff, who like their wartime ancestors rose to the challenges they faced without a complaint, remained positive and reassuring and perfectly enshrined the values we all hope to instil in our pupils. In summary, I hope our ancestors looking down on us would be proud of the ethos we have created at this school and that they would see that their strength, courage and resilience in times of adversity are still intrinsic to the life of Folkestone School for Girls today.

I would fully endorse this application to be recognised as secondary school of the year. Under Mark's leadership we have grown from being an outstanding school to one which exceeds all previous criteria and expectations. Among the many strengths we demonstrate are the values we espouse and the richness of the curriculum we offer. Every child is valued. Every child is listened to and I genuinely believe that you would struggle to find a richer, more exciting level of extra-curricular provision anywhere in the country. As a middle leader, I have been able to design and implement a curriculum that is both challenging and engaging. The provision of extra-curricular opportunities on offer is second to none. Enquiry is at the focus of our lessons. Students are encouraged to challenge and question the 'facts' as they see them and use these skills in other subjects and in the wider world. Students are encouraged to develop a voice, and debate and discussion play a fundamental part in our teaching. Learning is more than about knowledge acquisition, it is about discovery. Through the rich extra-curriculum programme we offer, with trips to museums and collections as wide-ranging as the Imperial War Museum and the National Archives and locations as diverse as Berlin and Washington, students are able to develop their understanding of the past in a way that no classroom could replicate. At every possible moment, from lunchtime activities such as Debating Society and History Workshops through to after-school public speaking and mock trial competitions we encourage students to develop their interests and express themselves as passionately and as confidently as they possibly can. What we do in History is mirrored by departments across the school. What allows this to happen is the trust the SLT team place in us as subject specialists and team leaders. The confidence they place in our curriculum plans, allows us to experiment with new ideas, take risks with learning strategies, and maintain a love of our subjects that staff and students readily share. I wholly endorse our bid to be recognised for the work we do as a school, and the amazing students we are so lucky to teach.

5. Quite simply, as a teacher, there is no other place I would rather work. It is assumed that grammar schools prioritise academic success above all else, but The Folkestone School for Girls, under the leadership of Mark Lester, takes enormous pride in the holistic approach every single member of staff practises, to ensure our young people are nurtured, as well as encouraged and challenged. We raise them and whilst the children themselves may not always be aware of that, it doesn't matter – we never forget it. And this comes from the equal assurance that every one of our staff – not only the teaching and pastoral staff but the canteen, site team, technical support and administration - are also cared for. We know each other. We listen, we laugh and we look to keep each other as encouraged and challenged as the students themselves. It is hard, incredibly frustrating, work at times, but the community of FSG keeps it all in perspective, so we know we are doing the right thing in every way.

6. Education at the Folkestone School For Girls is centred around a genuine ethic of care and a connected curriculum that develops curiosity of inquiry where pupils are taught how to think, not what to think and consider questions about the kinds of persons they will become. Pupils actively participate in the school and wider community and this deeply formative experience helps realise and develop the moral, intellectual and enabling virtues they need to respond appropriately to situations in any area of experience. Staff and School Leaders willingly give their support to a vast array of every growing super curricula opportunities which help uncover the talents, skills and values that encourage pupils to see themselves as a part of the world not apart from it and be equipped to be compassionate and of good influence.

Bertrand Russell wrote *"One of the symptoms of an approaching nervous breakdown is the belief that one's work is terribly important."* Staff here are a team and do not believe themselves to be any more than any other but follow Aristotle in saying that pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work and so have one of the foremost requirements of a fulfilled life.

7. Seeing as recent events have happened fairly abruptly I know many of us didn't even have the time to think about thank you cards. As a student who is infinitely grateful of our school I would still like to express my gratitude to you.

This school over the years has taught me academically and I don't believe anyone could ever challenge that principle. More importantly FSG has taught me how to be independent but when to ask for help, how to be confident and has

in effect been comparable to a second home in many ways.

When I was preparing to leave primary school I was so uncertain, having not passed my Kent test and not knowing exactly where I would end up, but I know for certain now that I ended up in the right place. The support, guidance, experience and fun that FSG has given us all is something that thank yous, cards, flowers and gifts could never repay.

Importantly at this difficult time for all of us, FSG have continued to excel in what they do best.. supporting us.

Although today was an emotional rollercoaster for most of us, there was one final thing I learnt. FSG is more than just a school, it is an opportunity but it is also a family in many ways and throughout this year you, alongside SLT and obviously our amazing teachers, have been at the heart of everything ensuring we are happy.

I would like to express one last thank you to you and all staff who have made my school career something to remember.

Many thanks and all the best for the future,

8. Dear Mr Lester

Lauryn is home, devastated but considering the circumstances so very grateful to you and your staff for the kind words in their leaver's assembly today and also for the wonderful powerpoint slides with memories. The fact that you acknowledge the importance of these things for the girls makes me so grateful to all of you for the care you take not just with their education but their wellbeing.

Lauryn has such positive relationships with so many of her teachers

I just feel so grateful that our girls go to FSG and couldn't wish for a better set of teachers who care and invest so much, led by you, at this difficult time.

Wishing you and your staff health and wellness in the coming months

9. It's a sad day as school life for the upper sixth form ends so abruptly and we all worry about what the next few weeks will bring us. However, I cannot let this time pass without taking this opportunity to thank you personally for the very clear advice you gave me when my husband was very ill. Hannah was sitting her first GCSE exam in maths the next day and your calm and clear approach was invaluable.

I would also like to thank the teaching staff who have supported Hannah over the years. FSG has been a very happy time for Hannah and I know she will really miss everyone.

But, it's not just the teaching staff who have made it a special place for Hannah. When Hannah was a little year 7 pupil, she always bought herself the same type of cake every break time. On one particular day she arrived slightly later than usual. Much to her disappointment, Hannah thought they had sold out. Then one of the canteen staff produced a cake from behind the counter. She announced that she had put one aside especially for Hannah because she knew it was her favourite cake. The school seemed a big place but it was full of kind people who cared about the little ones.

Whatever the future may hold for us, I'm sure FSG will continue in its good work.
I hope you and your staff stay safe.

10. Dear Mr Lester

Thank you – this is a strange ending to our 9 years at FSG. Very very sad for Y13 to be going in this way. Sad for parents too – we would have liked to have been able to say goodbye to you all in person as well.

Thank you for your maths teaching with both Daisy and Rosie and thank you for your encouragement and leadership. It is indeed a happy and great school with many dedicated staff and lots of inspiration.

At this moment Rosie is extremely disappointed not to be taking A'level exams in the summer and very worried about what this will mean in terms of getting into university when she has not stopped working throughout the sixth form (and all the way through the school). But I know that the government are working on a plan at this moment.

Thank you for all your letters this week, which I am saving.

11. The Folkestone School for Girls has helped me grow as a person hugely. I started in year 7, like all year 7s nervous about joining secondary school. I was a shy, quiet and worried about fitting in and making friends. However, in a few month's time, I will leave a different person. FSG has offered me many opportunities for me to develop my confidence. In year 7 the thought of speaking in front of anyone would have terrified me, but after joining Debating Society and at first unable to contribute, I became a regular and Thursday lunchtimes with Mr Higgins allowed me to find my voice and share my opinions – of which I have learned I have many! I have represented the school in Debating Competitions – and won! Now as DEPUTY Head girl I regularly address crowds of 300!

For me it was debating where I found my spark. For other girls the spark lay with something else and our school has an amazing array of opportunities that allow each of us to find that spark – whatever that might be. Sports clubs, teams & competitions, Dance, Drama, choirs, ensembles and musical evenings. Debating Societies, Young Magistrates, Rock climbing, mountain biking, cheerleading, a school radio station, Teentech, Young Enterprise. Even our own escape room! Students in year 8 join our Combined Cadet Force; students in years 9, 10 and beyond can access the Duke of Edinburgh Award programme. Literally something for everyone. FSG believe this is in an incredibly important part of education. Being part of a club or organisation requires teamwork and commitment. It develops self-confidence and simply can allow us all to grow, to enjoy and to flourish in other arenas.

History and Govt & Politics have become my favourite subjects, my interests and I see myself as a history teacher in the future, in part because of the love of the subject instilled in me during my time at FSG. Possibly even returning here to teach! I really believe that FSG is the best place for self- development; it gives every student the chance to develop and face challenges whilst being supported and valued. We know academic results are important - I have flourished academically with the support of my teachers and peers and achieved 10 GCSEs – all at Grade 7+ but we are also taught that exam results are what we get; they do not define who we are and will play only a part in shaping the people we become. We are also taught that it's not what we are or who we are that matters but *how* we are. We know that when we leave we will have far more to offer than just our results. I have learnt far more than my 'academic' curriculum - I have learnt about confidence, growth and kindness. When I leave in June I am confident that from the opportunities this school has given me I will be able to do whatever I put my mind to. As Mr Lester, our headteacher says 'I feel ten feet tall, bold and spectacular and ready to take on the world!'

12. I just wanted to pass on my thanks to all the teachers and staff who have continued to work with the girls during these unprecedented times, and thank you to Mr Lester for his daily updates, these have been reassuring.

I sent Maime in with a heavy heart this morning that this would be her last day for the foreseeable future, however we all have to do this to protect one another.

and for those who teach her, wish me luck.

Wishing you all and your families good health

13. Good afternoon,

I wasn't quite sure who to contact but I wanted to email and say thank you for the calm , caring and efficient way in which the school has dealt with this very strange situation we all find ourselves in ! Please pass my thanks to Mr Lester and his amazing team at FSG .

Many thanks

14. I just wanted to personally thank you and the teachers at FSG, my daughter Aimee is in year 13, and now will not be doing her final A level exams or finish school in a normal way which to her is devastating but she totally understands why and the unusual situation unravelling before us.

BUT without the amazing teaching and support she has had from day 1 at the school she wouldn't be able to come away with her predicted grades that she more than deserves and has worked so hard for.

I know at the moment in these uncertain times a thank you will go a long way and will never seem enough from us as parents, but Aimee has been able to grow into an amazing young lady and will go on to succeed in her chosen career at university in the future. And I'm sure the support from your school will continue for all students far beyond expectation.

So a massive Thank you to you and your staff for everything you have done for Aimee and I hope you all stay well and healthy, your updates have been amazing and quite emotional too and I hope you are all supported in anyway that is needed.

Kind regards from two very grateful parents

15. Thank you so much for the daily email updates, they have been both informative and reassuring. You have all done such an amazing job of keeping the current situation in perspective for the girls and their parents. Please all stay safe and well over the coming weeks. I know Lola will welcome the eventual return to school to her friends and the teachers that she holds dear. Take care

16. We appreciate you will have many emails to deal with today, however, we just wanted to make contact directly to say thank you very much for the support you have given Halle, and us as her parents, over the years both with her education and well-being.

She has loved being at FSG and, as you will no doubt already realise, is devastated not to be able to finish her school year and sit her A-levels.

We wish you the best of luck with the upcoming difficulties. These are strange times for us all to navigate through.

Stay safe, and thanks again to you and all the staff at FSG.

17. Just wanted to say thank you to you all. We really appreciate what every one of you has done and are still doing for the girls. Stay safe and well.

18. Thank you for keeping a calm head, offering sensible solutions and providing support and guidance to our children.

Both of my girls are really disappointed that school is closing which is a massive testament to how much they value their school and teachers.

These are unprecedented times, but also can be enriching as we pull together as a community, support each other and ultimately just be kind.

Thank you once again to all the FSG staff - I have absolutely no doubt that you are doing all you can to work through this difficult time and we are very grateful as a family to be part of this school community and lead by such a strong team.

19. To Mr Lester and all the staff

Thank you for your continued information and updates as well as the effort you have all put in during the year and during this challenging time. What you do for the pupils and us parents is amazing. Thank you for the amount of work you have all done to ensure Amy can still learn at home and I promise we will do all we can to support you and her during this.

I hope you all take care and look after yourselves as we need you! as do many generations to come and that is not credited enough but also from a personal point of view as we have come to know you all so well and are so grateful.

Keep safe, and we look forward to seeing you all when the girls return.

Best wishes and eternal gratitude to you and your staff

Subject: Re: Non Uniform

Lovely gesture. Folkestone is a special school. My girls are going to miss it so much over the coming weeks/months. Thank you for all that's been done to reassure the girls and the work that is being done to keep their education going.

Wishing all the staff well.

Hopefully normality be resume soon.

20. I feel confident in suggesting that I work in one of the best schools in the country for one of the best head teachers in the country and not just because we get some very good academic results which we do but mostly because the school in which I work is a happy place to be. I have seen it from I think just about every perspective in the 17 years that I have been there. I have been a member of support staff a member of teaching staff a governor and a parent and I truly do think that we are happier now than we have ever been.

Our new head was our former deputy and I think that his vision for the school has really added something impressive to our ethos. We have a huge list of extra-curricular activities available to the pupils but his goes well above and beyond the ordinary list of sports you might expect and involves a huge number of the staff body to share the workload. We are lucky enough to have our own climbing wall, mountain bike trails, combined cadet force, radio station and indoor archery range all set up under our headteachers vision that pupils will thrive in an environment where they can challenge themselves in safe ways and learn their strengths both inside and beyond the classroom. I myself have become an Archery GB qualified archery instructor and share a weekly after school club with two of my colleagues. Rather than being an extra demand put on me it has become the highlight of my week. I love the opportunity to interact with the pupils in such a positive way and to see them grow in confidence as they master a new skill.

I could go on and on about all the opportunities that pupils gain at our school because we have Duke of Edinburgh awards managed in house, we have an opportunity to learn to cook 7 basic meals, huge number of sports teams and music ensembles, dance troops and language leaders, a culture of work experience and all of it balanced with excellent support for pupils with dedicated pastoral staff. We have a huge number of school trips from the basic local theatre visits to the much more exotic trips to Iceland, Cuba and Namibia.

We are lucky to have staff who have embraced our recent mission to link with other international schools who have linked classrooms in Skype chat to classes in Nepal who have shared lessons and projects with our partner school. What is special is the way we come together as a staff to work together from all areas the school. For example World Book Day is well supported by the whole school not just teaching staff but support staff and canteen staff with many departments dressing up on a theme to promote the love of

books. Christmas dinner is something to see with everyone pulling together to serve, clean and manage the distribution of hundreds of school dinners the spirit of good will is alive and well in Folkestone School for Girls.

However to me there are moments that stand out and tell me how truly special the place I work is. I recently attended a celebration evening that was held in honour of the visiting teachers from our Nepalese partner school. Many of the pupils gave freely of their own evening to dance, sing and perform at the evening but the part of the evening that stood out to me was the number of pupils and staff who without being asked or assigned the job jumped up to help clear away the tables and pack down the hall even parents who had paid for their tickets as a night out willingly stayed on to help tidy away. There is a really positive buzz that permeates the whole school staff, pupil and parent body. The other moments that tell me how special my headteacher is are right now in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis he is the person who has run a calm and confident ship that has helped to ease the anxieties of staff pupils and parents alike. My teacher friends tell me stories of being required in most days to care for small numbers of key worker children or that they are going in several times a week whilst their Senior leaders are trying to go in sparingly. My story is very different there was no panic or rush or even overt pressure on parents not to send their children such as I witnessed at my son's school; but before school closed a rota was organised of who would be in and when, who the reserves would be and even classrooms and activities assigned to get through the early days. Now that it is clear that there are very few children needing care it is my headteacher who has taken this upon himself to oversee and sent the rest of us to work from home and minimise our risk of infection. He leads from the top and sets a true example for us to follow one that includes work life balance and promotes staff wellbeing as an equal priority to that of the pupils we care for. I know I speak for so many people at school when I say that it is never a chore to go to work it is a pleasure and a privilege to be in such a lively, happy environment with so many genuinely lovely pupils.

21. On the record, it's nice to see all these messages ; it reinforces why I love working at FSG. The great sense of community and conscience among the staff and the students alike. It vindicates that our job is so valuable to society and, to quote Carly Simon, "nobody does it better" than FSG!

So glad colleagues are being recognised for what they do.

22. Dear Mr Lester and all staff at FSG ,

I would like to express my complete admiration and appreciation for all you have done in the last 5 years but mainly in the last few weeks for the school and all the girls. I, as all of us mums and dads , have been very saddened by the way our girls in year 11 have had their entire life Turned upside down by this sudden and complete change of lives caused by this awful disease. People who do not have children in those crucial years most probably do not understand how much this means to our girls. The decision to cancel the exams that they have worked so so hard for , hours and hours studying and preparing for, came as a shock to them. And as my daughter put it, she has said , without sounding as a complete nerd I was actually looking forward to them ! Which on its own means how much you have taught them to appreciate a good education. But it is not just the exams they are going to miss, it is all the exciting stuff that they have looked forward to, the leavers fun that you all kindly prepared for them over the next 3 months Lots of tears shed over that. But you , and all your staff at your school have managed to put a smile on their faces, made them happy , made them CALM. Which is so so important in these uncertain times. And your updating emails have not just made me cry and laugh but also reassured us, mums and dads , that all will be just fine for them.

I am originally from the Czech Republic , and having a parent / teacher relationship this amazing is rather new to me and I must say very much appreciated. So I just wanted to say thank you. And to wish you and

all your staff at FSG good health and stay safe.

23. To Mr Lester and all the staff

Thank you for your continued information and updates as well as the effort you have all put in during the year and during this challenging time. What you do for the pupils and us parents is amazing. Thank you for the amount of work you have all done to ensure Amy can still learn at home and I promise we will do all we can to support you and her during this.

I hope you all take care and look after yourselves as we need you! as do many generations to come and that is not credited enough but also from a personal point of view as we have come to know you all so well and are so grateful.

Keep safe, and we look forward to seeing you all when the girls return.

Best wishes and eternal gratitude to you and your staff

24. Dear team,

Please forward my thanks to all staff who are striving to provide the best support they can in such challenging circumstances.

You are appreciated.

25. Dear Mr Lester and all the fantastic fsg staff especially yr7 staff,

We have had an excellent two full days of home schooling with no problems at all. Lessons have been really interesting, fun and challenging. Well done to you all and keep up the good work.

Kind regards

26. Thank you so much for all you are doing for our children.

Marnie has been working away independently on her lessons and isn't having too many problems. She is following your advice to stick to the timetable and seems to be quite enjoying herself. We both really appreciate everything you have provided for her. As I work from home, I was worried about how I would juggle work and the girls education & entertainment, so all you have done is a massive help.

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

27. Once again, thanks for all that you are doing, a great job considering the conditions! Keep up the good work and thank you from all of us.

28. Thank you for everything you're doing to support our girls. It is very much appreciated.

Kindest regards

29. Not sure if you receive replies, but just wanted to say this is working superbly for us at home! My daughter has simply had a few girls on video calls and they have helped each other through the lessons.

Thank you to you all for arranging it all so well, as this is allowing me to carry on working full time for a busy housing charity, so very much appreciated at this time with so many vulnerable residents to support.

30. Dear Mr Lester,

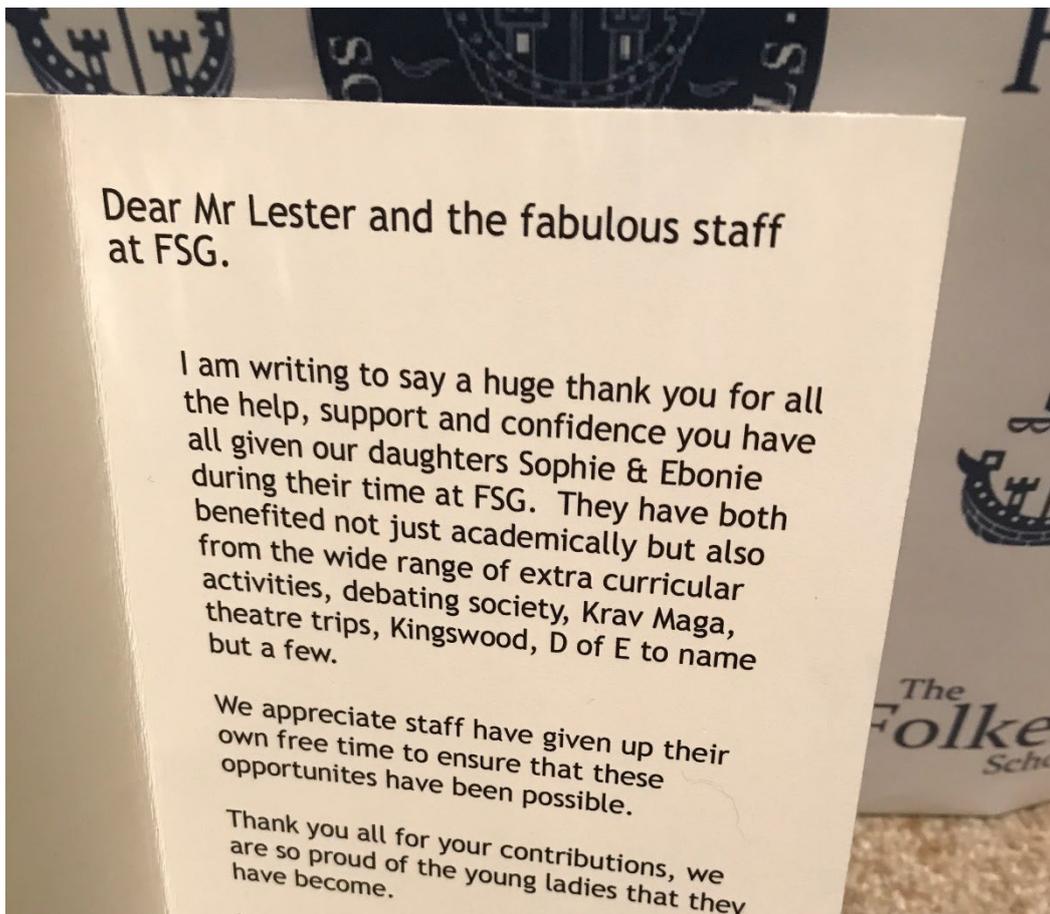
I would like to thank you all for the fantastic experiences that you have provided over the last 10 years for both Laura and Rebecca previously. The education you have provided has set them both up for a successful and rewarding life.

Kind regards

31. Thank you, Mr Lester and all your staff. Good luck with your own families. We loved your last line to the girls "Be nice to your parents"!!

You and the staff have had to adapt on a daily basis to the rapidly changing landscape and I cannot imagine how hard that has been, particularly as the guidance from government has been so changeable.

All the very best, hopefully some good can also come from this.



32. I just wanted to write to say thank you to all the staff at Folkestone girls school.

Chloe has been working through the work set and from what I have seen the teachers are still setting such high quality work in these circumstances. I can see that she is still actually learning and I want to say how much I appreciate it.

I totally understand that your lives have been turned upside down too and for some of you, the last thing you feel like doing is teaching mine and many others daughters.

I hope this message can be shared with those that it concerns. Keep up the good work and I hope everyone remains well.

33. Hi Mrs Fuller,

not sure who to send this to. Please pass on my thanks to everyone at FSG. I've been so impressed by how rapidly the teachers have got the learning online, and how well its been handled. Our kids are happily getting on with the school day, and are continuing to learn. The sense of structure and support is strong and helpful - and this is particularly important for us, as you know. I gather not all secondary schools are as good at this.

please thank everyone for us.

I hope you and yours are well.

34. Dear Mr. Lester and FSG Staff,

I just wanted to write to say thank you for the incredible support provided to parents and students during this global crisis. The transition this week to online teaching for our daughter, Hannah Rossbach (Year 10), has been very smooth. She has been able to continue her studies as normal, beginning at 9 and ending her day at 3:30, following her usual class schedule and occasionally FaceTiming a classmate during art or other lessons to still feel connected. It's clear that her teachers have been reading the work she submits and the brief, positive comments they have sent her have encouraged her to keep studying. The strong support she has received has made it possible for my husband and I to be able to switch our energies to the challenges of working from home. I'm truly grateful that she is a student at FSG.

35. Good morning

I hope this finds you and the staff well. Just wanted to again thank FSG for the updates, the clarity of information and the efforts everyone is contributing at present. Hope all is well and that you all stay safe and smiling. And your email to the pupils today demonstrates just why you are in our minds Headteacher of the Year! Take care and stay safe ('and sane')

36. Dear Mr Lester and all the Teachers at FSG,

We would have ideally liked to have said all this at the end of the school year, in person, individually to each and every one of you. Unfortunately, in the surreal environment that we are currently in, it is not possible. Karthik and I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you all for providing such a warm, supportive and encouraging environment for Ananya throughout the years of her secondary school life. She has thoroughly enjoyed coming in to school each day and has developed in confidence both personally and academically. Ananya leaves the school armed with learning skills, life skills and most importantly some very happy and wonderful memories spent at FSG. I am sure she will go on to look back to these years spent at FSG very fondly! Thank you for all that you have done for our daughter we wish you all at FSG the very best for the future.

Thanks and warm regards,

37. Dear Mr Lester,

We wanted to add our voices to the chorus of Thank Yous to you and your dedicated staff for everything that you have done for our daughter Lily and all the other pupils over the last couple of weeks.

A week on from the school closure and now having had valuable time to reflect on some of what has happened we feel that you all did a tremendous job in giving Year 11 support and a bit of a send off when they left on Friday. Was that only just last week?!

We are waiting to hear about the Namibia trip but obviously it looks very unlikely that it will go ahead. Hopefully there will be some way of rescheduling it for another summer.

We wish you and all your staff and their families a well deserved break over Easter.

38. Dear Mr Lester,

We just wanted to reach out to say THANK YOU to you and all the staff at Folkestone School for Girls. We have always spoken very highly of the school, of how dedicated and supportive the teaching and support staff are and of the quality of teaching and resources made available to the girls. The fact that notes are sent to pupils to acknowledge the fact that although they just get on with their work they are not unnoticed or unrecognised - that meant a lot to Aisling and us.

However, you and all your staff really surpassed yourselves in the way you have adapted to the current situation and so please pass on our gratitude to all staff.

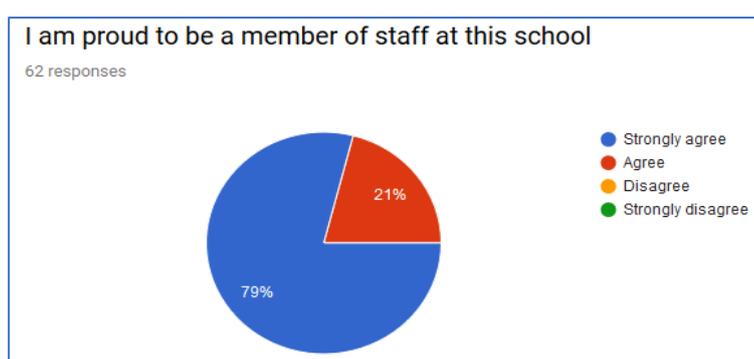
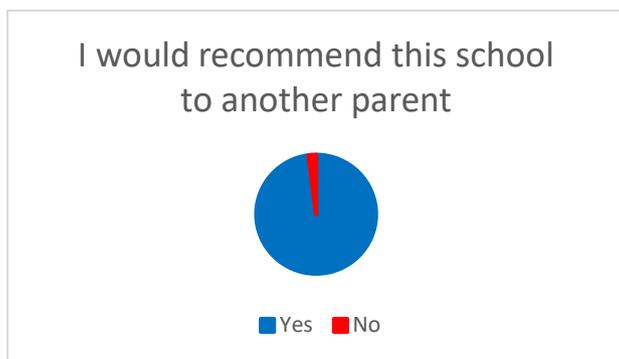
Despite the initial shock and upset that Aisling's final months at school were to be cut short to just two days, the staff (at very short notice and with so much else to deal with), made sure that these days were dealt with sensitivity and understanding and they went out of their way to make these days memorable for her. She has been comforted by the support and reassurance offered by the staff as to what will happen regarding her GCSEs and we are grateful for keeping us all updated as to the current guidance on what will happen.

Aisling is accepting of the situation now and has enjoyed doing a couple of the open university courses suggested and is now working on her HPQ and her A'levels. The way this situation has been handled and the support she has been given has allowed her to accept what has happened and look forward. By starting to work on her A levels she is making the most of this time available to her and is able to focus on the future.

THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH

39. I just wanted to respond to Mr Lester's letter earlier this week discussing the home learning and extended bank holiday and half term. We have been so impressed with the home learning set in many respects. Lots of the lessons have been engaging and built on previous learning and all have had v clear instructions. Our daughter (Ruby) from day 1 knew exactly what she needed to do - following her assembly - and so she is motivated and committed to logging in every day to complete her work. She is also v grateful and excited about extra days off! Thank you so much to everyone for your continued support and motivation at this time.

Parent/Staff voice



Year	
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An amazing school which provides an enriching and challenging environment for students. • Nurtures the girls and gives them confidence. • Reputation and student behaviour is well known. • FSG seem to have a good understanding of my child. Plenty of extracurricular activities and I like their confident consistency in their teachings. • ^ has settled in really well and enjoys going to school every day. She has made a good group of friends in her form group and outside. She currently is enjoying all her subjects and is coping well with all the homework set. • Great school so far, very pleased with the progress ^ is making and how well she has settled in.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent and supportive Teaching staff. • Mr Lester seems a very hands on Headteacher....and it was great he was at the parents eve last night talking to parents. He also seemed to know all students. • My daughter is happy, gaining confidence & speaks highly of her teachers. • Fantastic opportunities offered ie, clubs & trips • There is a strong work ethic in the school and goals are set aspirational for the girls. • Support with student welfare • High standard of learning • ^ is very happy and growing in confidence, she loves FSG and has made a lovely group of friends. She says most substantive teachers are excellent and is enthusiastic about her education.
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good pastoral support and extra-curricular activities. Performing arts is well considered. • I feel ^ is pushed to the best of her ability in most subjects and feels safe at school and there's good communication between parents and the school. Teachers have also offered ^ extra help in subjects that she finds more trying during break and lunch times which I think is fantastic and so kind of them. • ^ has made real progress in her confidence in the last year • Some good extra-curricular activities - she is delighted to be part of CCF • The Spanish teacher for our daughter has been amazing • We are proud to have our daughters go to FSG • It's an amazing school with some fantastic teachers. • The school sets the standard for education in the community - all credit to the team. • ^ is absolutely thriving at FSG. It plays a huge part of who she is.
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and the teachers are absolutely excellent. The extra classes offered to support those needing more help is brilliant. • Excellent range of opportunities, particularly in the more senior years. I feel like the school is continually trying to be better. • I like that homework is not too onerous so that my daughter has time for other activities outside school. My daughter has enjoyed extra-curricular activities, i.e. sports, debating, Mock Magistrates. • Both my girls have been extremely happy here, good support • Very good opportunities for students and good teaching/pastoral standards generally. • Excellent teaching with a great work ethic to encourage the girls to achieve highly But also gives the girls the chance to grow in their personal development too • Teaching is excellent and my daughter is well supported and progressing well. Thank you! • FSG has a caring and nurturing attitude towards its students and assists them in making good choices and striving to work to the best of their abilities. • We are very pleased with ^'s progress at FSG - a school she loves coming to.
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ^ has been positively transformed by the school

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy balance in messages to the girls re academic success and being a well-rounded person. High standard of pastoral care. Positive reinforcement to pupils on what they CAN achieve and believing in themselves, rather than what they're not achieving. • Great academic support from teachers • My daughter thrives at the FSG and has had an overall great experience • School encourages strong female characters and supports individuals • Inclusive, supportive, encouraging and cheerful. Your teaching staff and the SLT know our children, support and encourage them. Thank you. • As a parent I cannot say enough about how supportive, child centred, and caring the school is, the standard of education is high and staff work extremely well at supporting the girls to achieve the best version of themselves. I feel very grateful that Frankie is a pupil at the school. • The changes this year aiming to focus on more than just academic achievement are really positive. Love the idea of the book club, master class programme and the outdoor exercise opportunities in particular. It feels as if the school is moving away from being an 'exam factory' and more towards developing confident well rounded young people. The future is bright! • ^ loves school. She has done DofE and thoroughly enjoyed it. There is a good combination of success alongside some fun and I think the balance is great. Mr Lester is a real inspiration to the kids who all really like him and respect him
KS5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My husband, ^'s father, sadly died in September after a long illness. He was extremely ill during ^'s GCSEs and was expected to die. The school supported ^ during this difficult time so that she could reach her full potential. Thank you FSG • ^ has enjoyed all of her years at the school. • Excellent teaching, ^ is always challenged in her learning and has developed well in her studies. • Excellent pastoral care which is person centred • A school we are very proud to be involved with and would like to take the opportunity to send in our great thanks to the staff for the support and outstanding education our daughters have had and are having. We are very lucky. • Supportive school and despite its size treats all girls as individuals. • FSG is a great school with support for all ages • I would always recommend FSG, it has a lot of great points. • Fantastic ethos

Staff.

- You can tell by the confidence and politeness of the students overall that something is very right here. This means that the majority of the staff must also feel valued.
- It fills a teacher with confidence to know that they are trusted to do a good job. SLT encourage staff's own well-being as well as the looking out for the students which not many other schools do. This is one of the reasons I am happy working here as I feel as though I matter as well as the students that I teach.
- A willingness to take on board views of the staff; a high regard and respect for staff; removing obstacles and providing support to staff; strong emphasis on quality of teaching.
- If I ever think "I could do a better job myself" then something is lacking. I do not feel like this!
- Clear Lines of communication and an empathetic approach to staff and pupils
- Good management is almost seamless, you don't notice it going on until it is not there! Here decisions are always made in good time with lead in time for staff to adjust to changes. We all know in advance of important events. Staff are trusted to make decisions in their areas of expertise and feel listened to. Management is happy to share its ideals and rationale behind decisions and is happy to listen to opposing arguments and to change if necessary. Most importantly senior leaders are approachable and happy to help in any situation, they would not ask staff to do tasks they would not do themselves.
- I believe that SLT and our Head are effective, supportive and inspirational leaders.
- I really like the philosophy of kindness and rounded development that Mark is emphasising.

Nomination for Headteacher of The Year – March 2020

Nomination

My daughter joined the Folkestone School for Girls in September 2018. Mr Lester was in place as the new Principal, having previously served as Deputy Principal for a number of years. His appointment was announced a few months earlier in the local paper. The article outlined his clear commitment to provide a balanced and enriched educational experience, where academics were important but only part of the journey. I met a couple of teachers, when taking my daughter to sports clubs who shared their excitement at his appointment. He was a very a well-respected member of the senior leadership team, a truly authentic leader. He empowered his team to operate as teaching professionals but was available for support and a listening ear whenever required.

I shared their excitement, as I believed in his philosophy and was delighted to hear of his credibility and leadership style. However, Mr Lester's achievements within the first year and a half have exceeded all my expectations. His focus on the wellbeing of students and staff was clear; an advisory of 10 GCSEs to enable a balanced and enriched approach to school life. The launch of an extensive enrichment programme at inception with new facilities to match - a mountain bike track, a climbing wall, a radio station. For the first time students had the creative opportunity to publish a book, creating their own school publishing company to do so; and to work on professional productions. Diverse talents and strengths are celebrated and recognised. He listened to pupil and parent feedback for additional creative options for GCSE with the introduction of photography. When three teams of pupils participated in a national engineering initiative for the first time, their outputs were outstanding, but they did not reach the final. However, he made the time to congratulate them on the quality of their work and wrote a letter home to each of their parents (I was a volunteer on the programme, my child was not a participant). He was recognizing hard work and perseverance. Instilling a growth mindset. All three teams chose again to enter this year, and to become ambassadors, proud of their work to date. They in turn have inspired others to participate.

Within the first year the Principal also forged links with a school in Nepal, in recognition of the large Nepalese community in Folkestone. To promote tolerance and understanding, to underline that there is more that unites than divides us. This link along with an extensive offering of international opportunities has resulted in an imminent British Council International School award! Inclusivity also extends to sport. At a time when participation in sport is diminishing for teenage girls, I loved the approach to sports day; conventional competitive athletics were complemented by space hopper races, and welly throwing; creating a fun, uplifting and memorable event for the whole school. Mr Lester's balanced approach to life and leadership is authentic and inspiring. He would be an incredibly deserving recipient of Headteacher of the year. Thank you for your consideration.