



6<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

We were inspected by Ofsted on Tuesday 23rd and Wednesday 24th April 2024. The overall judgement of the inspectors is that we are a "Good" school. The inspectors highlighted many outstanding features, including students' Behaviour & Attitudes and our Sixth Form Provision. Our FSGBacc programme yielded the "fastest outstanding judgement ever given" for Personal Development. We are proud of our students, staff and school and they can be proud of this result, and we can go forward confident in our vision, with the knowledge that we are on the right track - our girls are seizing "every opportunity, enabling them to develop into articulate and confident young women."

However, there is some disappointment that despite the school being described in glowing terms, both in the report and by the Inspectors during the inspection, we have not retained our Outstanding overall judgement which was awarded in 2012 - albeit under a different inspection framework. Whilst FSG **was** an '**outstanding**' school in 2012, it **is** an even better school now. There are approximately 200 more students at the school and yet academic results have improved at both GCSE and A-Level. It is the character education and personal development that most sets us apart from FSG *then* and from other schools *now*. **Simply, more students; harder exams, better and much broader outcomes. The whole child; every child.**

All Ofsted inspections are a snapshot in time, and we happen to have had an inspection when we were overcoming two challenges: Firstly, an acute staffing issue in Mathematics, which following on from the disruption of the pandemic was doubly impactful. This could not have been predicted or planned for. The inspection team acknowledged that staff and senior leaders could not have done anything more or differently during that period, and despite all the disruption, results in Maths are still better than at 91% of schools and the department was judged as "Good".

A second challenge was a number of Trustees being new to post, following the retirement of longstanding and experienced colleagues. The Trustees are a valued part of the school leadership and governance, providing a scrutiny of decision making and future plans, but they had not yet developed expertise or had all the training they required. Like any new job, except this is a voluntary role, taken on around lots of other responsibilities, it takes a little time to learn the ropes.

The Ofsted process is a tick box exercise. If all the boxes can't be ticked then a particular grading cannot be awarded. A challenge then in just one area can shut off the route to the overall outstanding rating, even if inspectors recognise that the challenge could not have been foreseen, has been reacted to in an exemplary way, and there is an excellent plan to fix it. This is what happened at FSG. Both the areas for improvement had already been identified before the inspection and were flagged to the inspectors from the outset - they agreed that the plans we have to address them are robust, workable and will secure rapid improvement. However, we could not achieve the overall outstanding rating because we could not tick every box at every point in the process.

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I wish that I could share with you all the verbal comments we received from the inspectors. They were overwhelmingly positive, and a flavour of some of them comes through in the report, but not all of them. There is much to celebrate in the report, and in the feedback, even if the overall, single word judgement does not reflect the school I know and love. I am conscious that many of my staff are disheartened by the outcome of the report, and I too have felt saddened by it. On the Friday of our inspection week, I saw a parent at the performance of "Back in the Day" who said, "you are always there with the girls, Mr Lester." After a long and emotional week, it was the best compliment I could have had and it rang true. I am. We are.

However, a central tenet of our ethos is that "exam results are what you get; they do not define who you are." I am now going to walk the walk and talk the talk - as the inspector told me, our values are "inextricably woven through everything." An Ofsted judgement does not define FSG, our school, staff and students are beyond outstanding. They are exceptional.

At FSG, our intent is to be the best school in the world; nothing less. In verbal feedback inspectors concluded that "girls here are taught to feel ten feet tall; that they can change the world. By the time they leave, they do and they can." They also commented that there was "something special about this school" and naturally, I'd agree. Since the Ofsted inspection, in just over a month, we have had some brilliant things happen at FSG:

- 87 Year 9 students completed their final expedition for Duke of Edinburgh Bronze. All completed, not one pulled out!
- The cast and crew of "Back in the Day" are national finalists of the National Theatre's Connections Youth Theatre Festival, and will perform at the National Theatre on the 25<sup>th</sup> June.
- 50 Year 8 students are on cadet exercise "Mini Adventure" - they have had a water sports day at Mote Park, and are sleeping under the stars for a few days, putting their military skills to use in the field.
- Year 11 & Year 13 are sitting their exams, displaying composure, resilience and kindness towards their peers as they all go through a stressful period.

And many, many more...

I am immensely proud of all that we have built here, all the people I work with who give so freely of their time and make all the memorable experiences and rich opportunities happen, and, most of all, of your daughters who throw themselves into lessons and learning and the wider life of the school with such gusto.

What sets us apart, is that this is not an extraordinary month, or a snapshot of a couple of days where events just happen to have coincided - these opportunities and achievements happen throughout the year at FSG. We have students reaching for the next level, taking advantage of opportunities, living our values week in, week out. Bold and spectacular. Well qualified, well rounded.

Ten Feet Tall.

Yours sincerely



Mark Lester  
Principal