



Queens' Federation

**Queen Emma
Primary School**

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Executive Headteacher:
Mrs Sarah Jarman

7th September 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

Ofsted Inspection of Queen Emma School

With this letter, you will also receive a letter from Mrs Jarman announcing the results of the Ofsted inspection of Queen Emma that took place in July. As you will see, the school has been graded 'Good' in all areas, and 'Good' overall.

It should perhaps be made clear that the June 2023 inspection was not a follow-up to the earlier one, or related to it in any way. Ofsted recognised that the October 2022 inspection report was unreliable and it was completely withdrawn, from Ofsted's website as well as our own; legally, it is as if it never happened. I am sure you will join with all the staff and Governors in welcoming this June 2023 report, which fully vindicates the stand the Governors and the school took against the outcome of the earlier inspection.

You will recall that the PSFA very kindly set up a Just Giving page to help finance our legal challenge to Ofsted over the October 2022 report. Donations to the appeal totalled £6,772. I know that some parents have wondered what is to happen to the money. This letter is to update you on the legal challenge to Ofsted and how the PSFA money is to be used.

It was the school's contention that the October 2022 inspection report was not just inaccurate, but that it was based upon seriously unprofessional behaviour on the part of members of the inspection team. The report's overall judgement of 'Inadequate' made Queen Emma subject to an Academy Order, which would have torn the school away from Queen Edith and given it to a Multi-Academy Trust. This would have meant that the Federation itself would have been destroyed. This, as well as the personal distress the inspectors' conduct caused members of staff, is why we were so determined to take such a firm stand.

Any school wishing to challenge an Ofsted report has to use Ofsted's internal complaints system. Step 1 is little more than an opportunity to offer small corrections to the draft report; Step 2 is where a school can submit a substantive complaint; Step 3 is where a school can argue that there were irregularities in the handling of its Step 2 complaint. Since our complaint was both serious and wide-ranging, covering the inspectors' conduct as well as the details of their findings, we engaged the services of a law firm specialising in education.



When Ofsted dismissed our Step 2 complaint, our lawyers helped us to get legal representation from Counsel for an application to the High Court for Judicial Review of the inspection report. Acting on Counsel's advice, we also submitted a Step 3 Complaint, to which we attached a very full and detailed outline of the evidence supporting our case against Ofsted; the court action was stayed until Ofsted had had time to respond. It was at that stage that Ofsted finally conceded our case, ruled their own report as unreliable, withdrew it from their website and sent a written apology to Mrs Jarman for the 'distress and frustration' they had caused.

You will see, therefore, that although the case did not go to open court, we had initiated court proceedings. We also received extensive support and advice from our lawyers. All of this, of course, entails costs.

Ofsted then tried to argue that we should pay their legal costs, on the grounds that the case had been dealt with through Ofsted's internal processes and not through the court. We successfully resisted this, pointing out that Ofsted had turned down our offer of an out-of-court settlement and had repeatedly stated in the media that they stood by the report. In the end, they backed down and agreed that each side should pay their own costs.

All of this means that we have incurred significant legal costs. By budgeting carefully, and with support and advice from the Local Authority, we have been able to cover the greater part of them; the money raised by the PSFA JustGiving page just about helps us pay the shortfall. I'm afraid there won't be any left over for any other purpose.

Like many of you, I am sure, the Governing Body feels frustrated that we had to go to such enormous trouble and to such expense to get Ofsted to concede points that were made to them at the very start of the process. However, we are glad that justice has been served and delighted that, with the June inspection report, the truth about our school has finally been recognised.

We simply could not have done it without your support and the support of the local community: we are eternally grateful.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Sean Lang
Chair of the Governing Body

