

Feedback from the Governing Body of Thameside Primary on their Ofsted in November 2019

Elizabeth McCrum – Chair of Governors

Organisation

- Received letter at 11:30 on day before inspection
- One inspector visited for 2 days, with observer on Day 2 (did not input to inspection)
- Inspector wanted to see ALL governors at 08:00 on first day, tested governors against information given by HT in the phone call from the previous afternoon
- Phone call with HT was 2.75 hours long: initial call 1.75 hours, then took a break to get HT to draw up the inspection schedule based on the Key Lines of Enquiry
- Little time for last minute preparation/meeting of governors
- A few things were slightly different to what they had been warned to expect by the SPA – individual inspectors have autonomy to flex/tailor the format
- Deep dives were non-negotiable – inspector based these on the timetabled learning so no impact on reorganising lessons. Insistent that nothing was to be changed from the planned teaching
- Spent 30 mins with governors
- Timetable fast-paced and in 15/30-minute blocks

Areas covered

- Deep dives = Reading, Writing, PSHE
- Not really interested in governance per se. Didn't want to know about GB organisation, effective governance, which the GB felt might have been down to the good quality of information on the school website
- Did not ask Governors about progress since last inspection
- Whole inspection tested out what the HT said in the phone call
- Did NOT cover external/internal data and actually made efforts not to look at internal data
- Strong focus on Foundation Stage
- Keen on SMSC – detailed investigation of all available opportunities, many of which ended up in the final report

Questions asked

- Entirely the inspector's agenda – there was not time for governors to volunteer issues/topics
- Asked governors to talk until he put his hands up to stop them, then straight onto the next topic, so you knew exactly when you'd said the right thing
- How do you assure yourselves of the quality of education and the quality of the curriculum?
- Who is triangulating the curriculum? Who have you commissioned? What's the data saying?
- Safeguarding questions were extremely specific – asked details of KCSIE. What are the key changes? Describe these in detail

- Financial performance included spend on PPG and SEND – what was the impact and how do you know? Searching questions on value for money
- School leaders – very detailed questions on teaching – why are you teaching this particular lesson now? What has led up to it? What will come next? When will you come back to it? Middle leaders need to have very strong knowledge of curriculum.
- What does it feel like to be a SEND child in this school? Is that comparable to other pupils?

Feedback

- Formal feedback meeting concentrated on quality of education so did not explicitly mention governance, although inspector had praised it informally
- Staff could be informed of outcome straight after formal feedback, which made a difference to wellbeing – very welcome
- Inspector appeared very experienced and confident
- Feedback was appreciative, positive and beautifully done, even though a lot of it didn't make its way into the report
- Lasted no more than 45 mins, but leaders and governors felt they had all the information they needed to continue to progress with school improvement

Report

- Style is VERY different from previous years. First line was extremely positive.
- Report is short, and qualitative, and captured the essence of the school. Governors were pleased
- Lots of examples of the school's strengths in co-curricular access for SEND pupils appeared in the report

Tips

- SDP and SEF must be up to date and immediately accessible for revision
- Think of ways to demonstrate triangulation, so that inspector can see that you are not just taking the school's views on the quality of curriculum etc.
- Don't volunteer any information which the inspector is not able to test and substantiate
- Although formal participation was over on first part of first day, governors were in school during the inspection and did try to boost morale
- CoG went into school after the introductory phone call to speak to senior leaders

Reflection

- A bit like having a plaster ripped off – painful, short and sharp, but good to have got over with quickly, and good outcome, with a lovely report
- HT's timely preparation of the SEF was invaluable – during phone calls there is no time to look things up – they have to be at the top of their memory, and then the inspection is focussed on testing those things said, so they also have to be accurate!