

Joanna Young
Chair of Governors
Bowerham Primary and Nursery School
Bowerham Road, Lancaster LA1 4BS

joannamyoung@gmail.com 07598 707 358

Andrew Cook

Regional Director North West

Ofsted

Dear Mr Cook

I am writing on behalf of our staff and governing body to alert you to what we believe was an inadequate Ofsted inspection carried out at our school last month.

We have challenged the inspection process as set out in the school inspection handbook updated 01/09/2021 but we also wanted to send this to you so that you are aware.

We believe the inspectors did not take into account the specific impact of COVID-19 on the school community. The pandemic has upended all our lives over the past two years and frankly we find it extraordinary to be put through an inspection that made almost no reference to it when our school was so seriously impacted by it.

Inspectors did not seek to understand how school leaders responded to the situation nor did inspectors recognise, within the process in its entirety, that schools were unable to implement the curriculum in the usual way during the pandemic. This was challenged by the Head Teacher throughout the inspection with the lead HMI, Mrs Shillings.

We feel that it is also important to note that there was no acknowledgment that Lancashire had remained in the highest tier of lockdown throughout the pandemic which resulted in the whole community being in lockdown for most of the 18 months. This meant that wider learning experiences and connections would be impossible to implement because of this in comparison with other areas of England.

In addition to this we have some concerns around the conduct of one of the inspectors who conducted the inspection.

As a group of governors, we are all committed to this school and have undertaken extensive training and preparation for our roles. Many of us are teachers or retired teachers. Our school's adviser has consistently told us that our school is Outstanding – which is evidenced repeatedly by the activities that are constantly going on in school and the information that we receive from the staff.

Our head and staff team have worked incredibly hard to keep our school community together during the pandemic. Children have lost parents; staff have lost family members and many of our teachers (including our head) have been seriously unwell with Coronavirus.

Despite this, they have consistently led our school with unwavering devotion and care and have ensured that everyone in our Bowerham Family was kept as safe and well as possible, and that their

education continued. Being in the North West and located by a hospital we have had many lockdowns and have a huge proportion of key worker families whose learning has been affected.

The very idea that our school could be inspected by Ofsted who made almost no reference to the trauma of the pandemic seems unbelievable, especially given that it is not over. We are concerned that our Outstanding school has been short-changed by an inspection that has not allowed us to demonstrate how good we are and that has almost otherworldly expectations of what schools can achieve when pupils have been absent on and off for almost two years.

Specifically, when she shared the results, the lead inspector told us that the only area the school needed to improve on was students' retention of what they have learned – which is precisely the area in which you would expect Covid to impact learning.

Please tell us what steps we can take to get the result of this inspection reversed and the opportunity for us to be inspected again. We think that Ofsted's approach is iniquitous and we hope that no other school community is subjected to something so unfair when teachers have done everything they could in almost impossible circumstances.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Young,

Chair of Governors

Bowerham School

Bowerham Road

Lancaster LA1 4BS