

# Mid Sussex Times

## Parents defend school after Ofsted inspection

(Article published in The Mid Sussex Times – March 12, 2018)

Parents have leapt to the defence of their children's school after it was told to improve by Ofsted.

The Windmills Junior School, in Hassocks, underwent a two-day inspection in February - its first in more than five years - and the findings were published on March 5.



In their report, a team led by inspector Simon Hughes rated the school 'requires improvement' in all areas, a drop from its previous rating of 'good'.

Teaching was described as "not consistently strong enough" to sustain the improvements needed in pupil progress, and pupils themselves did not "take enough care with their work".

But the report recognised that headteacher Leila Murray and her team were "determined and unrelenting in their ambition that all pupils do as well as they can".

In addition, the curriculum was praised as "increasingly strong, broad and balanced" while being supported by a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Mrs Murray said staff were "obviously disappointed" by the rating, adding: "We knew that there were areas that were not as strong or consistent enough throughout the school. We had hoped that during an inspection that the work that the school had started, or where we were building on previous strengths, and had clearly evidenced, would provide us with a 'good' grading."

It was a view shared by parents, who contacted the school to show their support.

Mrs T May said: "I have read the Ofsted report with disbelief. Both of my children have had great experiences and a great education at The Windmills and above all, have been very happy and enjoyed school. We have seen the teachers commitment and dedication and the difference they make."

Mrs K Crisp said: "I have been very pleased with my daughter's progress at The Windmills and, most importantly, my daughter loves going to school and loves learning."

Dr Phil Cox added: "For what it's worth, I think the school is fantastic and there is nowhere else I'd rather send my kids."

Mr Hughes said Mrs Murray had a "realistic and accurate" view of her school's strengths as well as the areas requiring improvement.

He said: "With her deputy headteacher, she has been on an extensive journey of updating all of the school's processes and procedures.

"Many of the intended improvements can now be seen in the school's work, such as the way in which pupils conduct themselves and grow in self-esteem and confidence.

"However, there has been slower progress in extending the quality of teaching overall, and the impact it has on improving pupils' outcomes."

The children were described as "unfailingly polite and well behaved" as well as "confident, self-assured and articulate", though Mr Hughes said too few demonstrated the kind of strong learning behaviours needed to make rapid and accelerating progress.

All through his report, Mr Hughes recognised the work being done to make improvements where needed and highlighted the many strengths of the school.

Teachers were seen to be well-organised, with good subject knowledge. Mrs Murray said there had been a focus on improving writing, which saw a 10 per cent increase in attainment last summer.

Looking at the reaction from parents, she said: "We have had an incredible display of support from the parents, many of whom have sent in cards, chocolates, biscuits and emails showing support and confidence in the school.

"They clearly articulate that many of them feel that the Ofsted judgement isn't a fair reflection of the school and what they and their children experience day in and day out." She added: "We are positive and optimistic that the next time Ofsted visit that the strategies and action taken will be further embedded and will result in a 'good' outcome."