

Headteacher: Ms G Greenhalgh

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22 January 2024

Dear parents and carers

I hope that you don't mind me writing to you but I felt compelled to ensure that our parents and students are confident that we are acting to ensure that there is no further reputational damage to our fantastic school which is such an integral part of our community.

I am sure that many of you will have seen the Look North report on Friday evening and were saddened by the representation of your child's school. My colleagues and I were devastated by the way that the school was presented in such a public forum, and that our statement was not fully included in the report.

Millthorpe School is really a special place to work and for our students to thrive and grow. I'm so grateful to the many parents, of children with and without SEND, who have written to me over the weekend to show your solidarity and support for the wonderful school, teachers and students that we have here; this is the truth.

I'm also grateful for the really positive and supportive feedback that we have received from the four parents' evenings held since September, where 98% of our parents have stated they would recommend Millthorpe to other parents; this is the truth.

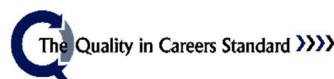
I was really saddened and disappointed by many of Rachael Maskell's comments, particularly as she has no evidence for a number of her statements. Throughout my career I have always welcomed the support and challenge from local MPs, however I haven't heard anything from Rachael regarding any concerns or worries from any parents, since a meeting that I invited her to in March last year. At the end of this meeting, I was reassured that we had come to an understanding and agreed a way forward. In her letter responding to parents following that meeting, Rachael shared the link to our contact details and encouraged any parents to raise their concerns. We also requested that she share any concerns raised with us. We have not received any communication from Rachael until we heard her speak detrimentally about Millthorpe on Friday. We have always welcomed any feedback from all our parents; we record any concerns or complaints and ensure there is a timely response and that all matters are fully resolved. We have no current open complaints about the matters raised in the report or indeed any other matter.

It is true that in York and nationally, there is a funding crisis particularly in relation to SEND provision. We have to work really hard to give our students with SEND the best education



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that we can with the funding that we receive. However, this is a familiar challenge for all schools and many of the Headteachers in York contacted me after the report aired to show their support and their shock that our MP had victimised Millthorpe in this manner, when all schools are facing this challenge, despite never visiting our classrooms or Inclusion provision. We'd be very grateful if Rachael had raised the national issue on Look North rather than targeting our school.

I'm eternally grateful to those parents, of children with and without SEND, who have written to Rachael Maskell, The Labour Party and Look North to raise your concerns about how the report was not impartial and how Rachael Maskell did not give any evidence beyond personal stories to validate her serious and damaging comments about our warm and inclusive school. I would be grateful if any other parents who feel strongly that this report was unfair, would do the same.

I joined Millthorpe as Headteacher six and a half years ago and throughout my leadership of the school I have always maintained that the distinctively warm, kind and inclusive culture and ethos must remain at the forefront of everything that we do to improve our outcomes for children. The leadership of the school has not changed over the last two years, as was suggested by Rachael Maskell, as my philosophy remains the same as it always has been - to provide a community school that enables every child to be the best that they can be.

We are truly fortunate to have had additional support over the last two years from across South Bank Multi Academy Trust to continue to make Millthorpe the best school that it can be. As Headteachers we now work collaboratively across the four primary schools and two secondary schools, absolutely supported by Mark Hassack, a previous Headteacher, and Clair Kitchen, an experienced Deputy Headteacher from York High School. As a group, we ensure that we can genuinely help each other to deliver the best education in safe and warm schools for our children and to work together to support the wellbeing of our staff and each other. As teachers, we work across the Trust with our peers in other schools to share our subject knowledge, to create shared resources and systems and to help each other out, as a family of schools should.

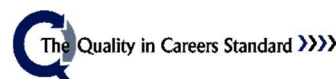
Our SEND provision has been particularly well supported from the investment that we have put into the provision across the Trust and through the support that we have all benefited from through Sue Wight, our Trust Director for SEND and Safeguarding. Sue brings a wealth of experience to the continued development of our SEND provisions at Millthorpe. (*Please see her qualifications and experience listed at the bottom of this email.)

The SEND provision at Millthorpe School is **now** the best that it has ever been; this is the truth. However, we are not complacent and continue to work to improve the provision. It is led by excellent specialist SEND leads and teaching assistants within inclusion, alongside two permanent school-based SENDCOs, Merry Norman and Victoria Armitage, and complemented by Sue Wight; we are more fortunate than any school that I know to have three SENDCOs working directly with the school. If you have any queries or concerns about your child's SEND provision, please contact send@millthorpe.southbank.academy



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Our data also shows us that we have improving outcomes for our SEND students; the academic outcomes of our SEND learners have significantly improved. GCSE results in 2023 showed an average of a 9% improvement for SEND learners in Maths and English in a climate where many schools did not.

Please see the information at the bottom of this email** demonstrating the extensive developments in our SEND provision at Millthorpe and how it has improved significantly in the past 18 months.

We know that we don't always get it right and there may be ways that we could work better. We truly value **all** our parents' feedback and we invite any parent, no matter how small the niggle may be, to speak to us if we can do something better or improve the educational experience for your child.

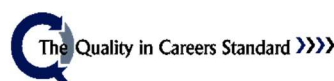
I think it is also a good moment to re-establish a parent forum or forums, to give a representative group of parents the opportunity to share their views, perhaps understand our challenges better and work with us on finding solutions and improvements. We will contact you shortly with more details of how this might work; in the meantime, please let us know if you would be interested in taking part by emailing the Headteacher's P.A. Mrs Helen Mackley : h.mackley@millthorpe.southbank.academy

Finally, it is really important that our community, our parents, our staff and particularly our students feel proud of their school. It is my role to make sure that we challenge anyone whose actions have the potential to damage our community and the reputation of the school.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read my email- please do get in touch with us or any colleagues that you feel would benefit from your support at this time.

Kind regards

Gemma Greenhalgh



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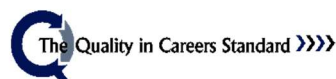


***Sue Wight, Director for SEND and Safeguarding**

Our Director, Sue Wight, brings experience which includes; senior leadership experience in a mainstream secondary school as a SENCO, Assistant Headteacher and safeguarding lead, Assistant Headteacher and SENCO in a Pupil Referral Unit, SEMH Outreach Lead across 100+ schools in Kirklees and primary school resource provision for pupils with Autism, ADHD, Moderate Learning Difficulties and Speech, Language and Communication Needs. She holds a range of senior leadership qualifications that support her work in this role which include: NASENCO Award, National Professional Qualification in Senior Leadership, National Professional Qualification in Headship, National Professional Qualification in Executive Leadership (ongoing), Post Graduate Certificate Leadership and Management in Education, BA Hons Degree in Supporting Children, Young People and Families, as well as being a Team Teach Instructor, Safeguarding Instructor and working as an Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM) Assessor.

***Some of the developments in Inclusion and SEND in the last 18 months:**

- There has been extensive SEN CPD for staff, following a whole staff SEN audit, including: Moderate Learning Difficulties, Autism, ADHD, EEF 5 a day, Attachment and Trauma and the SEN Code of Practice.
- In addition, teaching assistants have been accessing various intervention training including Fresh Start Phonics, Social Stories, Specific Learning Difficulties, Anxiety and Emotional Regulation.
- Training has been delivered from specialists including the Educational Psychology Team, ADHD Foundation and Applefields Special School.
- Staff are accessing further training this academic year, which includes Zones of Regulation, Speech and Language, Lego Therapy, Circle of Friends and Sensory needs.
- The school works alongside the Educational Psychology team to embed Emotional, Based, School Avoidance (EBSA) strategies to support reintegration to school.
- There is a SEN email address where parents can contact school for advice or further help.
- The school has signed up to be part of City of York Council's Project Launch for York Neurodiversity Project with the ADHD Foundation.
- The school has increased their assessments they use to identify pupils' needs early as part of the graduated approach.
- Bespoke packages of support have been put into place to support pupils with an EHCP as their needs are so complex they require external input.
- There is a robust SEN referral system in place for teachers to raise concerns to the SEN team, following in class quality first teaching strategies. The pastoral and SEN team meet every two weeks to discuss pupil wellbeing and offer a joined up approach to in school support.
- There are a wealth of interventions on offer to support pupils with additional needs that are reviewed termly to assess impact delivered by the SEN leads. Sample



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marking always includes SEN and disadvantaged pupils, to ensure pupils with SEN are making progress in lessons.

- We have invested in the fabric of our Inclusion Hub with the improvement of our indoor and outdoor spaces.
- The Inclusion rooms offer a supportive, quiet environment for pupils to catch up on work missed and take regulation time. Alternative Provisions used have all been quality assured by the school and half termly visits are in place to ensure they are still meeting the pupils' needs.
- Regular learning walks take place with a SEN specific focus that include book scrutinies.
- Staff are provided with weekly SEN tips to use in their teaching practice.
- Pupil passports for pupils with SEN are shared with all staff which include targets, strategies and access arrangements. These are reviewed termly as part of their SEN review meetings.
- We held a full 'Open Evening' event for any parent, including a SEND specific focus, to come in, without appointment to speak to all leaders in school. The response was overwhelmingly positive.
- The SEND team communicates regularly to parents in our weekly email and always encourages and welcomes communication.
- We also held a SEND parents of Millthorpe network evening in December where we welcomed families into school to network and speak to our SEND Team. This was extremely well received and, going forward, these will run termly and include input from our wider colleagues from the York local offer.
- After a thorough audit 18 months ago and in response to the growing number of students with additional needs the Inclusion team has increased in size. Furthermore there is now a specific SEND Manager linked to one of the four areas of need - Cognition and Learning; Social, Emotional, Mental Health; Communication and Interaction; and Physical and Sensory. This specialist approach enables us to support students with additional needs much better.
- We have also added an Assistant SENDCO role into our Inclusion structure.

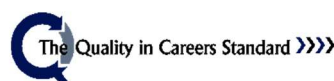
Some other contextual information to be aware of in relation to the comments made on Look North:

- There was a necessary restructure of Teaching Assistants' pay across the Trust over a year ago. This was to ensure parity and equality between all staff and to ensure that all staff are paid for the weeks and hours that they actually work. This brought the contracts of support staff in line with other schools and Trusts nationally. We did not lessen the number of teaching assistants. In fact, the capacity at Millthorpe School has expanded over this period of time. The SEND provision at the school is the best that it ever has been and pupils are exceptionally well supported.
- Like the great majority of schools, Millthorpe School uses agency Teaching Assistants from time to time, to cover absence and where the need arises. As we fully understand that changes in personnel can be challenging for children with



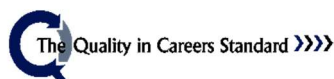
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special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), we try to minimise this impact through our professional SEND team.

- We have successfully recruited a number of high-calibre permanent TAs over the past few months as vacancies have arisen.



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