Turning around a Legacy and Reputation of Low Expectations to Achieve an Outstanding Provision

By Ann Probert

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Good Morning, everybody. As Sonia has just mentioned, I am Ann Probert. I am the Principle of Monem Academy in Sough. Monem Academy is part of the Park Federation Multi-Academy Trust. I am going to begin the presentation by talking a bit about myself. Sonia has already mentioned I started my career as a dinner lady, but my journey to leadership started way back when I was in primary school. I did really well at primary school. I had the ambition to become a police woman; some of my staff members would say I probably am a police woman on a day to day basis, but I did well and I left primary school having gained a place at a grammar school. I was the first member of my family ever to have achieved a place at a grammar school.

I quickly realised I wasn’t as academically bright as my peers and I struggled at grammar school. I struggled with the pace of teaching and I struggled with the style of teaching. I couldn’t keep up. The teachers would say something and because you’re in a grammar school you’re just going to be able to do it, and I really struggled.

The way I coped was I would sit at the back of the classroom. I was very, very quiet. I would have my head down; I would look like I was learning; I would look like I was doing well. But I was that invisible child.

In my third and fourth year at grammar school, I was no longer the invisible child in the classroom. I was the invisible child at school. I became a persistent absentee. If I did go to school, I would pretend I was ill, so you would find me in the Welfare Office. I left grammar school without a single qualification. I didn’t take a single exam. I hit 16; I left at Easter; I went to do a YTS apprenticeship as a hairdresser, not because I like hairdressing, not because I’m good at hairdressing, but because my mum wanted a hairdresser in the family.

02:36 I left that grammar school, feeling an absolute failure. When I look back, that wasn’t my fault. Why did nobody question why Ann Probert wasn’t achieving well in Years 1 and 2? Why did nobody question why Ann Probert is away from school in Years 3 and 4 and was always in the Welfare Office? The reason nobody questioned was I didn’t count because I wasn’t in their statistics. They didn’t need Ann Probert. They had 99 other children who were going to get that A-C grade. I was surplus to requirements.

So, I left school feeling an absolute failure and it was only when I had my children that I realised I was good at something and that was being a mum. I absolutely loved being a mum; I loved seeing my children grow and develop and improve. When they went to primary school I decided I would become a Lunchtime Controller; I wanted to be part of children’s’ lives.

I very quickly progressed from a Lunchtime Controller to a Classroom Assistant. My journey over 8 years saw me teach and assist in classes from reception, right the way up to Year 6.

I saw some really good teaching, really inspiring teaching, but I saw some very bad teaching, too and I was horrified that there were still invisible children in the classroom; that there were still disruptive children because they were trying to avoid having to do any work and to show that they were under-
performing. Nobody asked questions. So, I decided I’m going to go back to college and I’m going to get my GCSEs.

04:35 I got my GCSEs and I went on to do an Open University Degree and then in 2006 I became a qualified teacher. My passion for ensuring that children received the very best education led to quite a rapid progress in my career. In my second year of teaching I was a Year Team Leader and English lead, in my third year an Advanced Skills teacher, in my fifth year Vice Principal, eighth year a Principal and from September, I’m going to be an Executive Principal. This is the Ann Probert that left school without a single qualification. The reason I’ve achieved this today is I’m absolutely determined that no child would ever feel like I did when I was at school; that no child would ever feel a failure.

What I’m trying to say is there is no model for being an outstanding Head Teacher. You don’t need to have the NPQH; I don’t have it. You don’t need to have a Masters. You don’t need to have a PhD, etc. You just need to be determined to do your absolute best by the children.

So Montem Academy. Why Montem Academy? Montem Academy is a larger than average primary school. A high level of pupil premium, around 32% of our cohort are pupil premium disadvantaged. If we were to include our Roma children who make up 12% of our cohort, they’re our third largest group. That would go up to 42%. Our Roma children cannot claim the benefits, but live in areas of high deprivation. English as a first language – most of our children are EAL, and we’ve got a higher than national with SEN. That’s pretty basic; I’m sure lots of schools in this room have data that looks like this, but it’s the historic data of Montem, the history of Montem that made it really appealing to me.

06:57 Montem had very low expectation and ambition for its children and its teachers. If the teachers had a poor lesson, they blamed it on the children. How do you expect me to teach children like this? Montem was always bottom of the Local Authority performance tables. Always. And nobody ever questioned that. All the Heads in Slough would say “Ah, poor Montem. What do you expect? Look at the community Montem serve. I’m glad I’m not the Head there”. When the performance tables came out they expected Montem at the bottom. No shock, no horror. Consistently at the bottom of the Local Authority performance tables and always below floor standards. If a child came from Montem and went to another school, teachers would say “I hope that child doesn’t come into my class”. If a teacher from Montem went to work in a new school, that new school would say “Why did the Head employ that teacher? They worked at Montem”.

So why do I want to take Montem on as my first Headship - a really difficult school? The reason I wanted to take Montem on as my first Headship was the comments people said about Montem. The comments people were saying about the children were the same comments people said about me when I was in my grammar school and that was not going to happen. I wanted to ensure that those 860 children at Montem never, ever felt like I felt. But I knew it was going to be difficult. I needed to change minds, because people had written Montem off.

08:57 So I had to change mindset. I need two things to change mindset. I needed a voice. I, as the leader, as the champion, needed to have a clear vision, an absolute determination to do the very best by those children. This is what I believe in. High aspirations for all children; fight for the life chances of children. Montem is in an area of high, high deprivation. If we don’t educate those children, if they don’t leave Montem with the skills to go off into the workforce, they are never going to change that cycle. Identify and eradicate the barriers for the children. At Montem, most of the barriers were the teachers.
Never accept that this is all we can do and never set a feeling on what you can do for those children. So, I have the passion, I have the vision, we had the voice – it was my voice – I just needed the ears, the people to listen. We had three groups of teachers at Montem. We had the good teachers, the teachers who did a really good job in the classroom every single day, but they never believed Montem as a whole school, could ever change. They would do a good job, but everybody else, they’re never going to change. I wanted those teachers on the bus. I wanted them on the journey.

The second group of teachers were the teachers who shared this vision. They believed in it, but they didn’t have the skill set. They desperately wanted to be part of this journey; they just needed a chance, they just needed a leader who was going to develop and nurture them and lead them. You want those on the bus.

Then there’s the third group. The third group are the teachers who close their ears and their turn their backs and they were not going to admit that this was the right approach, because the moment they admitted this is the right approach, the moment they acknowledged change had to happen, was the moment they had to accept that they were poor teachers. We gave them a slight push onto the bus, but we quickly closed that door and we drove off and we left them behind. So those teachers, they were moved on. We managed them out; most of them we managed out, but there were some teachers that really recognised their performance was poor and they said goodbye and made our job very easy.

So how did we approach change in mindset? It was a four-pronged approach; fostering, understanding and conviction, a role model, developing new talent and skills and reinforcing formal mechanisms. These don’t happen in a cycle; they happen at the same time. What does change is the people that are doing this as you move closer to outstanding. So, in Year 1, who did all the speaking? Ann Probert did all the speaking. Who was the role model? Ann Probert was the role model, and so on. But as we developed as a school, different people took up the baton and different names went in here.

So, role models, they’re now my lead teachers, they’re my outstanding teachers. Developing new talent, that is our Directors of Teaching and Learning, they’re taking up that baton. They’re all happening at the same time.

Fostering, understanding and conviction. I had the vision, I had the ambition to change that school, but I needed to convey that to my teachers. The way we did that was to consistently share that vision over and over and over again. At every single given opportunity, we shared that vision, in staff meetings, in inset; we mentioned it at parents’ evenings. Every single given opportunity we shared that vision. We have this strap line here; we are uncompromising in our ambition to excel. We don’t use the word “outstanding”. The reason we don’t use the word “outstanding” is the moment you say “outstanding” you link it straightaway to Ofsted. We are not doing this for Ofsted. We are doing this for our children. When you look at the Handbook you go to page 18, 19 or 36, they’re the outstanding pages. We’re not ticking boxes, because the moment you’ve ticked those boxes, where do you go? So, we try to excel. We want excellence, because that’s an on-going journey.

When we’re talking to staff, we never accept that this is all we can do. Good is not good enough; we want to improve all the time. We challenge poor behaviour; even those good teachers, the teachers that are doing a good job, if they do not meet the expectation we have a conversation. The reason we challenge poor performance or teachers who are not meeting our expectations, is the moment
you allow one person not to live up to this, you’re saying it’s not important. So, you consistently have to share the vision and ensure its embedded across the school.

15:07 Role model. When I joined Montem I was the role model. I, as the leader, had to do something completely different to the previous Head. The staff needed to see that not only is this person saying it, they are also doing it. Whatever is important to me, I need to demonstrate that I am willing to do it. Displays are really, really important to me. They show our pride in our school, they celebrate success. So, it’s important to me. I need to model that I’m willing to do it. When I talked about displays to the teachers, I said “Right, this is how it needs to be. This is what I need it to look like. It’s needs to be well-presented, colourful. It needs to be about the children’s work, it needs to be doubled back”. When I looked at some of their displays – I don’t know if you have them in your schools – but the teaching assistant would say “I’ve double-backed to Ann” and the border starts off thin and it starts to go “Yes, not good enough”. I thought they had got the message; they hadn’t. So, what I did was I found the busiest corridor in the school, I set up with my backing paper, my staple gun and children’s work and I did it myself. Teachers would say “Ann, you’re the Head Teacher. You shouldn’t be doing a display”. Why not? It’s important to me and if it’s important, I need to be doing it as well.

Things like marking. We have a very strict policy on marking that teachers are expected to follow. If a teacher is unable to follow that, we don’t just say “go away and do it yourself”. This is what the policy says. I used to go in and sit with the teacher and help them mark their books so that they understood what was required.

17:09 Teaching. The quality of teaching in the classroom is super-important. So, when I went in to do observations, if I wasn’t happy with what I was seeing I would stand up and just ask if I could take over. Modelling to the teachers; this is what we need to be doing. Academic outputs at the end, the outcome’s really important. I have an 80% teaching commitment at Montem because that’s important. I do the leadership bit at home, or I’ll do it in the evening. The most important thing is those children have a really good education. What I’m saying to myself is “if I’m expecting you to do it, I’m going to do it”. It earns you high levels of respect.

Developing new talent and leaders. At Montem we don’t do CPD for CPD sake. So, staff don’t go in every week and have a new initiative introduced to them, a new fad. The CPD we offer is relevant. It’s relevant and closely linked to our school development plan, or its responsive. So, we’ve done a learning walk, we’ve looked at the books, we’ve found an area of weakness and we tackle it. We give the teachers the training, the skills, to live up to the expectation that we have at Montem Academy.

We ensure that the right people, the right teachers receive the right CPD. Some teachers need CPD to develop. Some teachers need CPD so they can go to the next level, so that they can become the future role models. In Year 1 I virtually had to do all of the CPD and the training. That doesn’t happen anymore. We’ve empowered people so that they can now deliver the right training and support to other colleagues. The ownership has moved from me to them.

19:21 The important thing about CPD is teachers need to understand why they are being trained in this new way and they need to understand the impact that’s going to happen. I remember as a teacher the Head would say “Right, every Tuesday you’re having CPD” and you’d go “Oh, it’s a new fad. Why are we doing this? What’s wrong with the old way?” Inform your teachers; make sure they know what you hope to achieve from this CPD.
Reinforcing mechanisms; creating a Montem way. It’s really important. Our teachers would take a scheme and one class would do a particular scheme; another class would do a different scheme. Then a different Year Group would be doing something completely different. There wasn’t consistency. Nobody was skilled sufficiently to deliver consistently good lessons. They were just grabbing ideas.

We’ve created our own teaching and learning identity. There is a way that we do literacy. There is a way that we do maths. There is a way that we do phonics. Consistency; this is what we expect. We’re going to train you, we’re going to support you but when one child leaves one Year Group and they go to the next Year Group, there’s that consistency; it’s going to be the same approach. Changing mindset is all about consistency, consistency, consistency, because with consistency comes confidence and with that confidence comes growth. People feel empowered. They know what is expected of them.

21:06 So we’ve moved from this very static, negative mindset to a growth mindset. People know what is required of them and they believe they can do it because they are seeing the impact. We got to the third year at Montem and we were looking through the Ofsted framework as we were doing our SEF. We kept asking ourselves “Why are we grading ourselves as good? What do we need to do to fulfil that Ofsted criteria?” So that when we are doing our SEF we can say this is what we are achieving. Lots of different comments came up, things like “Well we can’t be outstanding because our TAs aren’t really affective all the time” or “We can’t be outstanding because some teachers don’t accept accountability”. Only a few teachers. There were lots of lots of small things that were preventing us from being outstanding. We categorised those ideas and it came out that we were going to accept no excuses. Teachers relied on excuses as a way of avoiding being accountable. Every second counts; everyone’s accountable and everyone must excel.

If I was to say one thing that moved us from good to outstanding it was these four golden expectations. These four golden expectations were identified by Ofsted. They were reported in our Ofsted Report because everybody lived and breathed these expectations. So new excuses. Montem is a school where excuses are now allowed. Our teachers need to be solution seekers. They are not allowed to come into my office and say, “Johnny isn’t going to achieve the age-related expectation this year, Ann, because he’s on holiday a lot” or “his handwriting is poor”. “He can’t spell”. No. You need to come into my office and say, “Mrs Probert”, or “Ann, Johnny’s having trouble spelling. Is it ok if we do some lunchtime boosters?” “Is it ok if I deploy the TA differently in the afternoon so that she can work with Johnny on his spellings?”

23:44 We also say, “Don’t come to pupil progress meetings saying it’s really hard for me to move these children on because...” Come to those pupil progress meetings saying “This is what I need to do. This is what we’ve done, this is the impact and this is what we’re going to do next time”. The same applies to children. We don’t accept excuses from the children, either. If we’ve set homework and they come in the next day and they say, “I didn’t do my homework because...” No. Not acceptable. The children come in and if they haven’t done their homework they will say “I was unable to do my homework yesterday, but can I do it at break time?” No excuses.

The same goes for parents. Parents at Montem when I first joined, when we started to tackle behaviour, parents would come in and say, “Well that child did it as well”. “My child only did it because that child did it”. We now say “No. We’re not talking about that child; we’re talking about your child. Accept that your child hasn’t done the right thing. What are we going to do as a school, as the parent, what are we going to do together to ensure it doesn’t happen again?”
No excuses at Montem. By creating this culture where teachers have to be solution seekers, you’re empowering them. They’re not always having to knock on my door; they feel confident that they have the skills and ability and ideas to improve and change the lives of the children.

Every second counts. I’m sure, if any of you’ve got TAs that you often find them at the photocopier and you think “How long does it take you to photocopy 10 pieces of work?” It’s not just that they’re at the photocopier; they’ll then walk down the corridor, past the library and they’ll have a little chat to the Librarian. You say to the teacher “Look, your TA’s been out for ever”. “Oh. Have they?” Then you start to think “Well, if you haven’t noticed they weren’t there, do you really need them?”

26:07 So we insist on our teachers if you’ve got a TA use them, or lose them. They are a very, very costly resource. So now what we do with our TAs is the morning they’re in the classroom. In the afternoon, they’re providing live intervention. That live intervention is closely linked to gaps in learning that may have occurred from the morning. So as the teacher is walking the classroom, they will identify gaps, they will try to fill those gaps immediately. They will address misconceptions immediately and if the child is still struggling, the TAs will take those children out in the afternoon, where before, if the TA wasn’t photocopying they were sat listening to the teacher doing a lovely history lesson and not contributing very much.

At Montem we have a saying that there is no tomorrow. You need to fix the gap today. You need to find a way to eradicate any barriers today, not tomorrow. The other thing we did at Montem was, we did something quite radical with our staff insets. They happen every Tuesday. They last for about 1½ hours so 3:30 to 5pm, directed time. In the first year, we put lots of CPD in because that’s where we were, but then we found actually teachers are getting a bit bored of this CPD. They’re sitting there, they’re dozing off, or if it was a staff meeting they weren’t really focussed because they’re just thinking about the marking that they’ve got to do when they go back.

So now what we do is the first two Tuesdays of every half term we dedicate to CPD or pupil progress review meetings. The other Tuesdays within that half term every single teacher does a tuition group. We have 39 teachers doing small group tuition on a Tuesday after school, so we’ve moved that staff meeting, that’s gone and the teachers are now doing Tuesday tuition right the way across the school, 8 children in every single group on a Tuesday. It costs me nothing, because it’s part of their directed time.

The teachers really bought in to it because the children they were working with on a Tuesday were the children that could prevent them from reaching their performance management targets. Those teachers would rather be working with those children than listening to some more pointless CPD.

We also have our TAs wearing pinafores. So, they have little aprons and in those aprons, they have lots of flash cards. So, when the children are lining up, outcome the flash cards, making sure that every single second counts. Moving between the classrooms, while they’re waiting to go in to the next lesson. In Year 6, they’ll start flashing out the 3-cubed, 3-squared, all the spellings. On the playground, the younger children absolutely love standing round the TA as she’s flashing the phonics cards. Every single second counts at Montem. Everybody is accountable. It doesn’t matter whether you’re in the office, a cleaner, the caretaker, TA, teacher, everybody is accountable for the success of Montem.

29:57 We tell our teachers and this didn’t go down too well with the office staff at first. If you need photocopying, don’t send your TA, don’t you go yourself. Phone up the office and ask them to come down and photocopy for you, because half the time the office team are waiting for the next call to
come through from a parent and that could be hours. Use the office team. The office team didn’t like that at first but everybody is accountable. You’re there for the children.

Lunchtime controllers. Some of our lunchtime controllers, they’ll see poor behaviour and they turn their backs and walk away. Not acceptable. The other thing we’ve done at Montem, we’ve changed the performance management targets. It used to be X% of your class need to achieve this. We’ve now changed that to X amount in your Year Group must achieve this. They need to contribute to the wider community.

What led us to that change was there was a pupil progress meeting. It was for Year 2 and I wasn’t happy with the data. The teacher who took the top set said “I’m ok. All of mine got it.” “Well of course all of yours got it, because they’re the top set. What about the poor teacher who’s got the low ability children? She’s having to work lunchtimes. She’s having to do more clubs after school to enable these children to achieve, and you think you’ve done your bit because you’ve got the more able to pass”. Not acceptable. If you’ve got the more able group you should be helping your colleagues. You’re working for 120 children in that Year Group, not just 30. So, we’ve changed that performance management target.

We also say – this happened in the first year at Montem – the moment a teacher steps over their threshold into the corridors of the school, if a child runs down the corridor well they’re not my child. Actually, they are your child. The same with the office team. If you see a child being rude or not doing the right thing don’t turn your back. You need to address that situation there and then. Everything has to be for the greater good of the school. Everybody must excel. Everybody’s expected to be the very best. In the first year the CPD was very directed. It was driven by the Senior Leadership Team, it was driven by the needs of the school.

32:49 What we’re seeing now is teachers really developing a reflective practice. We introduced IRIS which is a learning video platform. Initially, they were reluctant. They felt it was going to be a tool that I would use to performance manage them out of the school or to use against them. I had to promise them “I don’t want your passwords. I don’t want to see the videos. If I ask for your videos you can say no to me. I will not request the videos of your lessons. I want you to use these to develop your own practice”.

We had an IRIS champion, somebody who enjoyed using IRIS, and she promoted it across the school. Teachers at first, they used to blur out the video. There’s a tool on IRIS that you can video yourself, but you can blur out your face. They seemed quite happy to do that at first. Now what they do is they don’t blur out their face and they actually say to their colleagues “Can you come and look at my lesson and give me some tips?” Fantastic. This is exactly what I want to happen. I want the teachers to be developing themselves.

It’s moved a step further now. That the teachers are videoing themselves and they are sending it to colleagues. “I had a great lesson; do you want to see what I did? Can you give me some feedback?” We had one NQT. He’s really, really good at Big Read, the comprehension lesson. So, we had some colleagues come from other schools; we had 8 teachers going into his classroom and the Head and the Deputy. We walked in and there he had IRIS set up as well. He wanted to video himself in that situation. An NQT. It’s bad enough having 8 adults in the room, without having it videoed at the same time.

35:00 So everybody uses IRIS to be reflective practitioners now. At the start of the three-year journey, I would have to ask teachers to go and see this teacher. So, I would say “Right. You need to
go and see that teacher, arrange it. You need to go and see that teacher”. Teachers are now identifying who is good at a particular skill, a particular subject and they are doing it themselves.

One of the things Ofsted said when they came in was “This ambition to improve – “It was absolutely amazing language they used – “The ambition to improve at Montem is seeping through the walls. When you walk into Montem you breathe in this desire for excellence” because that’s what our teachers want to do. They want to be the very best they can possibly be.

So, what does our school look like now? Montem was something out of the 70s when I arrived. It had those horrible floral curtains in the hall. It had the sink units where the piece of curtain went along the bottom. Absolutely horrendous. So, we invested in the environment and people said to me “Ann, why are you painting the walls Magnolia? Why don’t you just leave the murals on the wall?” The grey and black and green murals on the wall, they were hideous. I said “No, because they’re not bright. I want the environment to be crisp and clean. When there is a display it stands out; it’s not hidden by a jungle scene on the wall”. “But Ann, the children will graffiti those walls”. “Ann, the children will make marks on those walls”. No. The children won’t because we’re going to teach them not to do that and we’re going to raise the expectations”.

37:13 We had this horrible outside area. The wood is around to stop the children going on the grass. We don’t want you on the grass. We don’t want you near the classroom windows when the children are having their lessons. No, let’s trust the children. We’re going to turn that into a lovely outside picnic area for the children. “But Ann, why are you doing that? The children will throw their food on the floor”. “No, they won’t because we’re going to teach them”.

It was that low expectation of the children all the time. They just didn’t trust our children. So, this is our environment now. Nice, bright and clean. You’re probably saying where did the budget come for this? This MUGA alone cost £150,000. I left that to my deputy. I said, “I want a MUGA”. She said, “I’ll give you a MUGA, Ann”. I was expecting one court. When I came back in it was this huge MUGA which horrified me because it cost a lot of money, but the children absolutely loved it.

Now, where did the money come for that? The money for that came from the fact that I’m teaching 80%, my deputy’s teaching 80%. I’m saving on teacher salaries. I also got the money for that MUGA because, at Montem, if you were a poor teacher you weren’t moved out, you can have 4 children in a group and you can do it in that room over there where nobody’s going to come and see you. No, that doesn’t happen at Montem. So, we save money there.

38:51 Things like this, our pathway to our early years and our outside amphitheatre. We worked with Mars. Mars funded those projects. We worked with the community to help fund the changes at Montem. Displays. “Ann, do not do 3D displays. They will pull them off the wall”. They won’t. The children take a lot of pride in their displays. They go up to their displays, they look at the displays and you can see children in the corridor looking for hours – well not hours, because that would be wasting every second – but they sit there looking at the displays with real pride. They don’t touch them. They don’t damage them. They actually look after them. If they see a piece of border that’s falling down they’ll run to the Librarian and tell the Librarian and she’ll get her glue stick out and she’ll glue it back up. They take real pride in their learning environment.

Displays are important. They raise expectation. This is what it looks like at Montem. Our children are really, really happy. The relationship between the children and the adults is key. There’s trust now, where there wasn’t trust before. There’s a partnership now where there wasn’t a partnership before. Teachers are enjoying teaching, because they now have the skills to teach.
So is there a magic ingredient to being outstanding? There isn’t the perfect SEF, there isn’t an outstanding ADP. It doesn’t matter what format you do those on, it’s the impact that counts. The magic ingredient for me is the culture that you set in that school, that you challenge people who say, “You can’t do it, Ann”. You challenge those who say, “It’s not worth it because they’re Montem children”. You start to change that culture. You start to embed in people, in adults and children, that together we can do this. We can improve. We can develop. We can make Montem a really great school.

Now this is the toughest one, the reputation. The toughest mindset change, the group of individuals that we are struggling to change their views of Montem are Head Teachers. When I went to my first Heads conference after we got outstanding, only the outstanding Heads came up to me and said “Well done, Ann. Great news”. All the rest said “How did Montem do it? You must have had a soft inspector”. They won’t have it. They won’t accept it. The community are on board now, because they come into school and they can see it, but the Head Teachers of Slough will not accept Montem as being an outstanding school because it was always bottom. If Montem was bottom, that’s good for them because it means they’re not bottom. They don’t want us to be outstanding.

When other Heads have had inspections since, and I say to them “How did it go?” they would say to me “Yeah, we got good. But they wanted to give us outstanding and said no, we’re not there”. I hear that a lot. Some of you have heard that a lot as well. So, what we do is when there’s a moderation event, we have it at Montem. If there is a competition we have it at Montem. If there is an early years meeting we have it at Montem, because they need to come in. They need to come in and feel and see what Montem is like.

Improving our website. Ensuring that we showcase exactly what we do. Websites are important. When Ofsted came in they had already done a lot of checks on that website. It’s key. The website is really, really important. Making sure we have positive reviews in the local paper. I mentioned earlier our third largest ethnic group are Roma children. Roma children do not achieve very well nationally. They make fantastic progress but they really affect your data, if you’re data driven. Would I rather have good data, or the Roma children? I’d rather have my Roma children any day. However, other schools in the Local Authority, a Roma child would go to the school – we want to come here – “You can’t come here. Roma children go to Montem”. Not acceptable.

There’s another school, SEN children, “You don’t come here. You go to Montem”. These are the Head Teachers that keep sending us the children they really don’t want to have in their school and yet they turn around and say Montem’s a bad school.

These are the things Ofsted said about Montem: “Pupils have the highest levels of enthusiasm of learning. They feel safe. Leaders are uncompromising in their ambition”. Now this is key, because...
this, our phrase “uncompromising in our ambition to excel” is all around the school. It’s everywhere. It’s what we talk about and Ofsted picked it up and put it in the Report.

Pursuit of excellence. We talk about excellence all the time. So much so that Ofsted picked it up. At all levels, from lunchtime controllers to teachers, to senior leaders, to the trustees. Teaching in early years, they benefit from high quality of teaching.

That’s Montem Academy and that’s our journey to outstanding.

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