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Graham Tate
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Tate

Ofsted remote visit to Highfields School

Following my remote visit with Peter Humphries, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 24 November 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the visit's findings. Thank you for the time you made available to discuss your actions since September 2020, when the government expected all schools to open fully to all pupils.

This visit was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for visiting schools while routine inspections are temporarily suspended. Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, we made this visit remotely to reduce pressure on the school.

Ofsted's visits to schools during the autumn term are not inspections. We are not giving graded judgements. We did not undertake the usual range of inspection activities and were unable to check other sources of evidence, such as visits to lessons or looking at pupils' work. The content of this letter gives an overview of our discussions about what has happened in your school this term.

During the visit, we spoke to you and members of the senior and middle leadership teams. We did not speak to pupils.

Context

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's education system is managing the return to full education for pupils, following an extended break in formal schooling due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In undertaking this focused work, HMI are visiting a broad range of schools. HMI will visit a sample of:

- approximately 1,200 schools across all Ofsted grades (outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate)
- maintained schools, academies and free schools, special schools and centres of alternative provision, including those in cities, and coastal, town or rural communities.

The information from this visit will feed into Ofsted's national reporting so that the insights can be shared with the government and the education sector. We did not find any significant concerns during the visit. In such a case, an inspection report would be published on our website and available to parents and carers.

We did not consider your response to COVID-19 during the spring and summer terms 2020, when the school was not open to all pupils.

From this visit, inspectors noted that:

- At the time of the visit, there were 62 Year 9 pupils, 51 Year 11 pupils and 12 Year 12 students isolating at home. Since the beginning of the autumn term, more than half of your pupils have had to work from home at some point.
- All pupils in Year 11 and Year 13 continue to study the same subjects as last year. Teachers formally assessed Year 11 pupils during the initial weeks of term, to identify pupils' new starting points. You told us that you are encouraged by pupils' performance in these tests, as many could remember what they had learnt previously. Teachers are confident they will cover all the required subject knowledge ahead of national assessments in the summer term.
- All pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are studying their usual range of subjects. You told us leaders have reviewed their plans and altered the order of some learning. In English, for example, leaders moved the teaching of Macbeth from the summer term to the autumn term. In subjects such as drama and physical education, you said that leaders have adapted plans so that pupils can participate in practical activities.

- Teachers planned transition work for Year 12 students to complete before the start of term. You explained that this helped prepare students for their post-16 courses.
- You told us that teachers check what pupils know and remember, more frequently in lessons. You say that these checks show that many pupils do not have significant gaps in their knowledge. You attribute this to the remote learning that pupils completed during the summer term. As such, you expect all pupils to return to their usual curriculum before summer 2021.
- You told us you have well-established structures in place to provide remote education for pupils who need to work at home. Teachers provide a combination of live online lessons and digital resources for groups of pupils who are self-isolating. Individual pupils, working at home, use technology to attend lessons remotely and access the same work as their classmates. Teachers check and review pupils' completed work.

Thank you again for contributing to this important national work. The views and experiences you have shared will help to inform future policy.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wolverhampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ian Tustian
Her Majesty's Inspector