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Michael Simpson
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Dear Mr Simpson

Ofsted visit to Holywell School

Following my visit with Al Mistrano, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 20 October 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.

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 the senior leadership team, including the senior leader responsible for safeguarding. We did not speak to pupils because of the protective measures in place.

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 (coronavirus) 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:

- The school opened to all pupils on 9 September 2020. You are using part-time timetables to support the return of a few pupils.
- Attendance has increased since the start of term and is currently slightly below what is normal for this time of year. You are working with individual pupils and their families to allay anxieties about pupils returning to school.
- Pupils are studying the full range of subjects, making up the school's usual curriculum. In music, design technology, French and physical education, teachers have changed the order of subject content or adapted the activities that they use to teach the curriculum. In science, teachers have changed the order that they teach some content to make the best use of practical equipment.
- Leaders have adapted curriculum plans in all subjects to include knowledge that was not taught during the spring and summer terms of 2020. You have recently assessed all pupils. Teachers are also using their informal checks on learning to identify areas that they need to revisit to secure pupils' understanding. You are planning to use the results of these checks to target support for individual pupils where they have gaps in their learning.
- In English and mathematics, pupils are currently being taught in mixed-ability form groups. During lessons, teachers are checking pupils' reading skills and adapting their teaching to help individuals catch up.

- In mathematics, teachers are also doing quick checks in lessons to assess pupils' understanding. Teachers are using these checks to revisit skills and knowledge where they feel that pupils are not secure in their understanding.
- You have focused on offering the full range of subjects that is usually taught in Years 5 to 8. You are investigating how you can reintroduce the extra-curricular trips, activities and visiting speakers that are usually part of pupils' learning experience.
- You have plans to deliver the curriculum using remote education, should the need arise. These plans range from providing education for individual pupils to provision for the whole school. You will use your existing learning platforms to provide activities for pupils in each subject, including using online lessons, both live and recorded, if necessary.

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 director of education for the diocese of St Albans, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Central Bedfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Wilson
Her Majesty's Inspector