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Tracy Hush
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Dear Ms Hush

Ofsted visit to Berwick Academy

Following my visit with Graham Findlay, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 29 September 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 leadership team, including the senior leader responsible for safeguarding. I held a short telephone conversation with the chair of the trustees. 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:

- Pupils who were new to the school, in Year 9, started on 3 September 2020. Others started back in their year groups across a 10-day period from 4 September 2020.
- You told us that attendance has risen compared with the school's normal attendance for this time of year. Leaders are working with other agencies and professionals to support a very small number of pupils who have not yet returned to school.
- Leaders said all subjects that make up the school's usual curriculum are being taught. The content and sequencing of some practical subjects, such as physical education and music, have been adapted because you want to minimise the contact and sharing of equipment among pupils. The curriculum timetable has been altered to reduce pupil movement across the school site.
- In September, pupils in Year 9 and Year 10 took tests in English, mathematics and science. You said that this helped to identify what pupils know and remember in each subject and alerted teachers to the subject content that they most need to focus upon. Leaders have used the information from tests, and from pupils' work prior to September, to direct support to pupils who have fallen behind.
- Leaders told us that they have introduced a 'step up to sixth form' pathway to reassure parents and students about the measures in place to keep safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. You have altered the curriculum offer for students in Years 12 and 13, offering a wider range of options in your school.
- Pupils can access learning in all subjects through the school's digital resources. Leaders explained that pupils can, for example, watch videos, listen to stories read aloud by staff and engage with 'quizzes' that test their knowledge of

different subjects. Leaders said that they are building on this online offer to enhance their remote curriculum.

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 Northumberland. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Manuel
Her Majesty's Inspector