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21 October 2020

Mark Lawrence
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Dear Mr Lawrence

Ofsted visit to Buckler's Mead Academy

Following my visit with Heather Barraclough, 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 the senior leadership team, one of whom is the designated safeguarding lead. 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:

- You opened the school to Year 7 pupils on 7 September 2020 and to all pupils on 8 September 2020. The majority of pupils attend full time. A very small number of pupils attend part time because of personal issues during lockdown.
- Attendance is in line with the normal attendance for this time of year. There were no 'bubbles' isolating at the time of the visit.
- All pupils are studying their usual curriculum. This year, specialist teachers are educating pupils on personal, social, health and economic education. Since the start of term, pupils have been learning about mental health and well-being.
- Leaders have assessed pupils' new starting points. The curriculum is being adapted to accommodate any gaps identified in pupils' knowledge. For example, you have identified that Year 7 pupils have gaps in subject specific language.
- You have adapted the curriculum offer in Years 7 to 9 since March 2020. Pupils can now choose to study languages: French, German, or both, instead of the one language previously on offer.
- Years 10 to 11 are continuing with their option choices and are accessing practical learning in every subject, when appropriate.
- The plan for future remote learning is complete in every subject. You have included a one-to-one session for pupils if they do not understand the online learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks
Her Majesty's Inspector