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27 October 2020

Glenn Prebble  
Headteacher  
The Holmesdale School  
Malling Road  
Snodland  
Maidstone  
Kent  
ME6 5HS

Dear Mr Prebble

### **Ofsted visit to The Holmesdale School**

Following my visit with Louise Walker, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 6 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, the executive headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and a representative of the local authority. 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 on 2 September 2020 to Years 7, 11 and 12. The remaining year groups joined them on 3 September. All pupils attend full time.
- Comparing attendance at the start of this year, with the same period a year ago, has shown that pupils' absence in September was slightly higher than last year. Staff are in contact with families of pupils who are not currently attending school, to support their return.
- All pupils are studying the usual range of subjects. Teachers have had to make some changes to the order in which they deliver certain topics because of the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus). For instance, to focus on pupils' reading skills in English, teachers have brought forward units on novel reading to the start of term. In physical education (PE), athletics is taught so that learning can take place outdoors. Leaders hope that by summer 2021 the normal sequence of learning can be reinstated.
- Staff have carried out assessments throughout the school to check what pupils have remembered and can do. Teachers are using these to identify gaps in learning and adjust what they teach to address them. Early signs are that what pupils have retained in their learning is variable.
- At key stage 3, pupils joining in Year 7 have been assessed to check on what they can remember from their mathematics and English learning at primary school. Teachers will use this information to address any gaps in learning that they find.

- Key stage 4 pupils too have been assessed to see what learning they need to recover. No pupils have dropped any subjects.
- Teachers are supporting sixth-form students as they pick up their new courses.
- Pupils who are unable to attend school can access their learning on the school's website. The school is ready to offer this to all pupils, should it become necessary in the future. Teachers also provide paper-based materials for the small number of pupils who cannot access the online resources.

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 and the chief executive officer, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Yasmin Maskatiya  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**