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Rob Petrie
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Dear Dr Petrie

Ofsted visit to Cockermouth School

Following my visit with Alyson Middlemass, 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 and your head of school. We also spoke with members of your 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 reopened to Years 7, 11, 12 and 13 on 2 September 2020. The remainder of pupils started on 3 September 2020. You expect all pupils to attend full time.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly the same as the normal attendance rate for this time of year.
- Across all year groups, pupils and students are studying the full range of subjects that the school would normally offer.
- In Years 7, 8 and 9, you told us that in some subjects you have changed the order in which pupils learn the content of the curriculum. For example, pupils currently learn more theory in their music lessons. In science, restrictions around how pupils can complete practical work safely mean that pupils do not complete as many experiments.
- In Years 10, 11, 12 and 13, pupils continue to study for all of their examination subjects. You ensure that these year groups have access to specialist resources. This is so that pupils can learn the full curriculum content.
- You told us that you have changed the order in which GCSE and A-level content is delivered in some subjects, for example in science and mathematics. This is so that teachers can prioritise the more complex units of work.

- You explained that Years 7, 10 and 13 have already completed assessments to establish what they know and can do. You have plans for additional assessments in the next few weeks for the other year groups.
- Systems to deliver and monitor remote learning are in place. If pupils need to study from home, teachers have the resources to provide the same curriculum that pupils would experience in school. You plan to provide full lessons for each class, every day, to maintain continuity of 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 governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cumbria. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Smart
Her Majesty's Inspector