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Amanda Mordey
Principal
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Dear Mrs Mordey

Ofsted visit to Merstone School

Following my visit with Ann Pritchard, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 15 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 deputy headteacher, who is also the leader with responsibility for safeguarding, and the assistant headteacher. 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 fully for the start of the autumn term on 7 September 2020. On 5 and 6 September, pupils attended school on a part-time basis. You told us that this was to support pupils' transition into school and to familiarise them with the protective measures in place.
- Attendance is slightly lower than it was for the same period last year. You have worked with families and external agencies to support pupils' attendance. For those pupils who have not been able to attend school yet, you have maintained contact with the families and provided opportunities for pupils to learn at home.
- Pupils are being taught all their usual subjects. You have prioritised swimming for those with physical disabilities. Alongside this, your 'recovery curriculum' aims to teach pupils what COVID-19 is, how they can keep safe and how they can develop positive mental health. You have placed all pupils in class 'bubbles' to reduce the chance of infection.
- You explained your usual focus on mental health and well-being throughout the curriculum, and how this is supporting pupils to re-engage in learning. This includes experiences such as interacting with friends, developing physical skills and establishing a love for learning.
- You have checked what learning pupils have remembered since the period when schools were only open to some pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions. Both academic learning and learning to meet other individual needs are based on these checks.

- You are aiming to provide vocational experiences for older pupils within school, because their usual access to the community is not practical at this time. For example, you are developing an in-school cafe that will give pupils the opportunity to cook and serve food.
- You are further developing your arrangements for remote learning, should it be needed as a result of COVID-19. This offer is based on online learning to support mathematics and English, as well as broader mental health and well-being.

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

Yours sincerely

Chris Pollitt
Her Majesty's Inspector