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20 October 2020

Mrs Alison Dodd  
Headteacher  
Stepping Stones Short Stay School  
Bowerham Road  
Lancaster  
Lancashire  
LA1 4HT

Dear Mrs Dodd

### **Ofsted visit to Stepping Stones**

Following my visit with Steve Bentham, 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 your deputy 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 to all pupils on 3 September 2020. Three pupils were on a part-time timetable for two weeks. All pupils are now attending full time.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with their usual attendance at this time of year.
- Pupils are studying their usual curriculum.
- You have purchased new reading resources based on the needs of pupils. These are used alongside phonics lessons that are linked to a new spelling programme. You are giving additional catch-up sessions to help pupils where needed.
- In mathematics, you have also purchased new resources. Teachers are using these to identify learning that may have been missed or forgotten during the spring and summer terms.
- In other subjects, staff are assessing where pupils may need additional support to catch up. You have adapted the curriculum to prioritise pupils' mental health and well-being.
- You have adapted and refined your provision to deliver education remotely, should this be needed as a result of COVID-19. Teachers are able to set and monitor pupils' work in this way. You have arranged training and support for staff and parents to help deliver this remote education, should it be required in the future.

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

Yours sincerely

Simon Hunter  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**