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Rachel Hudson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hudson

Ofsted visit to Blacon High School, A Specialist Sports College

Following my visit with Ahmed Marikar, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 1 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 the 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:

- You opened the school to all pupils on 7 September 2020. You expect pupils in all year groups to attend full time.
- Pupils' attendance is slightly lower than you would normally see at this time of year.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 11 have returned to the school's normal curriculum. This includes pupils in Years 9 to 11 who are studying the subjects they chose for their options. You told us that the topics in some subjects have been re-ordered to help pupils catch up on the learning they missed during the spring and summer terms.
- You have asked teachers to use a variety of approaches to check pupils' current knowledge and understanding. You told us that teachers are beginning to use this information to make decisions about which topics should be taught next. This information is also helping to identify which pupils need additional support.
- You have set up systems for teachers to provide online access to the resources that pupils are using in lessons. A small number of pupils are using these to help them learn when they cannot be in school. You have plans in place to use this approach for all pupils should it be necessary in 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 Cheshire West and Chester local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pennington
Her Majesty's Inspector