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Stuart Smith
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Dear Mr Smith

Ofsted visit to Thomas Bennett Community College

Following my visit with Louise Walker, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 13 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 and 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 pupils in Year 7 on 4 September 2020. Pupils in all other years returned on 7 September. All are expected to attend full time.
- Pupils' rates of attendance are lower than typical for this time of year. The number of pupils self-isolating has fallen this month.
- All pupils are studying their full range of subjects. You have made changes to the order of learning in some subjects. For example, pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 do not currently have access to specialist rooms, so they are learning the theory in subjects such as design technology rather than doing practical activities.
- Teachers have tested what knowledge pupils remember in English and mathematics. You intend to use this information to identify pupils who need extra help to make up missed learning. Teachers will also use it to help them plan lessons to cover elements that all pupils need.
- You have found that pupils in Year 7 need more help than usual with their reading comprehension, so teachers have prioritised this in English lessons. You have asked for all subject areas to include more writing practice for Year 7 and Year 8 pupils.
- Pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 are continuing to study all of their GCSE subjects. You have found it useful that schools across the multi-academy trust have

worked together to ensure that pupils can access all content. For example, teachers have created videos of science experiments for pupils to view.

- In the sixth form, teachers have found that students in Year 13 have fewer gaps in their knowledge than pupils lower down the school. Usual work experience placements are not available currently, so you are exploring online opportunities.
- You have continued to train teachers to create digital resources so that lessons can move online, if required. You are trying to ensure that pupils have access to the technology needed but are likely to need to provide some pupils with printed packs of work.

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 of The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT) multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lucy English
Her Majesty's Inspector