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Gaetano Ferrante
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Dear Mr Ferrante

Ofsted visit to Starbank School

Following my visit with Ian Tustian, 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, members of the senior leadership team, senior leaders responsible for safeguarding and the rapid improvement lead. 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 to all pupils on 7 September 2020. Pupils are attending on a full-time basis.
- You said that attendance is broadly in line with normal for this time of year. At the time of the visit, Reception children and pupils in Year 5 and parts of Year 6 were self-isolating.
- Teachers assessed pupils' new starting points across their subjects when they returned to school. You have used that information to make some changes to the school's normal curriculum.
- In the primary phase, leaders have introduced a 'recovery curriculum' to focus on reading, phonics and mathematics. All other subjects in the wider curriculum are being taught. During this time, these lessons are now shorter. Leaders plan to return to the school's normal curriculum as soon as possible.
- In the secondary phase, you have changed the allocated teaching time for some subjects. For example, pupils in Years 10 to 11 are now spending more time studying English and mathematics than previously. In other subjects like Spanish and humanities, pupils now have one hour less teaching time. Some of these changes are due to the school moving to a new curriculum model which is unrelated to the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- You have a system in place to deliver the school's curriculum remotely to all year groups should this be needed. You said that you are currently working on optimising that system to include direct online teaching for the secondary

phase. The online lessons are already in use in the primary phase for the pupils that are currently isolating.

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, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bianka Zemke

Her Majesty's Inspector