

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Lee Kane
Headteacher
Astor College (A Specialist College for the Arts)
Astor Avenue
Dover
Kent
CT17 0AS

Dear Mr Kane

Ofsted visit to Astor College (A Specialist College for the Arts)

Following my visit with Alice Roberts, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 3 November 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, your deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers and leaders responsible for safeguarding and attendance. 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 reopened to all pupils on 4 September 2020, following a short induction for Year 7 pupils. All pupils are expected to attend full time.
- Current attendance is broadly similar to what you would expect at this time of year.
- Pupils across the school are studying the normal range of subjects you had planned to offer, apart from vocational courses in hairdressing that cannot currently be taught. You plan to have the full curriculum back in place before the summer term in 2021.
- You are currently completing assessments with Year 7 pupils to fully understand their starting points. Year 9 pupils all continued to study French, geography and history at the beginning of this term. Normally, most pupils choose just two of these subjects from the start of the year.
- Your assessments of Year 11 pupils show that they are mainly on track to do well, especially in English, mathematics and science. You told us that this is because they responded well to small-group teaching in June and July and are motivated to work hard for their teachers, given future uncertainty about examinations.
- In the sixth form you are continuing to prioritise providing students with careers education and workplace experiences. You are continuing to use links with universities and business partners in so far as current guidance will allow.
- You have refined your approach to online learning this term. Pupils who need to work at home will be expected to attend lessons at agreed times rather than completing activities when they wish.

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 Dover Federation for the Arts multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lee Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector