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Ruth Stone
Principal
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Dear Mrs Stone

Ofsted visit to Thurcroft Junior Academy

Following my visit with Steve Shaw, 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 and the vice principal. 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:

- All pupils were expected to return to full attendance when the school opened fully on 3 September 2020.
- Pupils' attendance is slightly higher than it was at the same time last year.
- Pupils are studying their usual range of curriculum subjects. Leaders told us that teachers have carried out formal and in-class assessment to identify gaps in pupils' learning. More lesson time has been made available to close the gaps identified in reading and mathematics.
- To close gaps identified in reading, leaders have prioritised the revisiting of phonics in Year 3 and Year 4. In Year 5 leaders are prioritising fluency and reading speed, and in Year 6 reading comprehension.
- In mathematics, leaders have identified gaps in pupils' knowledge of number and times tables because of COVID-19 restrictions. To close these gaps, there are activities on number and times tables every day for all year groups.
- In the wider curriculum, leaders said that they have made changes to the sequencing of some subjects because of COVID-19 restrictions. For example, in physical education outdoor activities are being taught in the autumn term. In science, lessons involving practical activities are planned to come later in the year.
- In Nursery, leaders have noticed that pupils do not work together in the same way because of COVID-19 restrictions. Leaders have therefore planned more activities to help pupils work together.

- Leaders have plans to deliver the curriculum remotely to whole classes and smaller groups of pupils should the school be affected by COVID-19 restrictions 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 chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the Aston Community Education Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Rotherham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Vellensworth
Her Majesty's Inspector