

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



25 November 2020

Fay Beach
Headteacher
Rayner Stephens High School
Yew Tree Lane
Dukinfield
Cheshire
SK16 5BL

Dear Ms Beach

Ofsted remote visit to Rayner Stephens High School

Following my remote visit with Rachel Goodwin, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 6 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. Following changes to government guidance and the imposition of COVID-19 (coronavirus) lockdown restrictions, we made this visit remotely to reduce pressure on the school.

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 senior leader responsible for safeguarding); members of your senior leadership team; members of the AspirePlus Educational Trust; and the deputy safeguarding leader. We did not speak to pupils.

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 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 11 on 1 September 2020. Pupils in Year 7 returned on 3 September 2020. Between 7 and 9 September 2020, Years 10, 8 and 9 returned, one day at a time. You expect everyone to attend full time.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with their usual attendance for this time of year.
- You have made changes to the curriculum in Years 7 to 9. For example, pupils are not currently studying food technology and computing. You have also temporarily reduced the curriculum time given to music, drama and technology. This is to give pupils more time to catch up in English, mathematics and science.
- In Years 7 to 9, you described how teachers have altered how practical activities are taught in subjects such as science and music. This is because pupils in these year groups do not have as much access to specialist classrooms and equipment.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are following the full range of examination subjects. You explained that in Year 11 you have reduced the curriculum time for geography and history to provide additional time for English. You plan to reintroduce all subjects and resume the usual subject content for all pupils by summer 2021.

- You described how teachers are using assessments to check what pupils know and remember. For example, you told us that some pupils are less confident with their multiplication tables. Teachers plan to revisit the curriculum content that pupils have missed or forgotten since March 2020, alongside new learning.
- You told us that where possible all pupils will access 'live' lessons should they need to study the curriculum remotely. Where this is not possible, you said that pupils will be given access to online resources. Pupils without the necessary technology will be given paper copies of the resources that they need.

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 interim chair of the governing body, the chair of the board of trustees, the interim chief executive officer of the AspirePlus Educational Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Tameside. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alyson Middlemass
Her Majesty's Inspector