

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



25 November 2020

Christine Smiles  
Headteacher  
Talbot House Trust  
Hexham Road  
Walbottle  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
Tyne and Wear  
NE15 8HW

Dear Mrs Smiles

### **Ofsted remote visit to Talbot House Trust**

Following my remote visit with Carl Sugden, Seconded Inspector, to your school on 5 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, your assistant headteacher and your special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). 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:**

- The school opened to all pupils on 8 September 2020. All pupils are expected to attend.
- Attendance levels are above those seen at the same time last year.
- Pupils are following most of the subjects in the school's usual curriculum. Teachers are adapting how they teach practical activities in physical education. They are using the school grounds for outdoor activities that were previously taught off site, such as orienteering.
- Teachers are using a personal checklist for each pupil to identify gaps in their knowledge and skills. They are then putting support in place to address these gaps.
- Teachers are using assessment to check pupils' phonics and reading knowledge. You explained that teachers have identified areas where pupils' reading abilities are less secure than they were previously. Teachers are introducing new systems to support pupils' reading.
- In mathematics, leaders are spending extra time on areas such as algebra, which pupils found more difficult to study when working from home.

- School leaders are training more staff to provide the social and emotional support that some pupils need.
- Teachers provide pupils with packs of work when they have to study from home. They also provide parents and carers with guidance on how to use these resources with their children. Teachers are developing online systems to support pupils when they are working remotely.

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 chief executive of Talbot House Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Newcastle. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Kirtley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**