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Geraint Edwards
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Edwards

Ofsted remote visit to The Priory School

Following my remote visit with Isabel Davis, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 10 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, members of the senior leadership team and curriculum leaders for English, mathematics, science and music. 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:

- At the time of our remote visit, all pupils from one form group in Year 9 and some pupils from a physical education class in Year 9 were learning at home. They were using the school's provision for remote education. You expect these pupils to return on 18 November 2020. A handful of other pupils have needed to self-isolate and learn at home since the start of term.
- Pupils are studying all subjects within the school's curriculum. Leaders have altered some of the content within subjects for this academic year. Staff are offering some extra-curricular activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and online visiting speakers.
- Staff have started to check what pupils remember about what they have been taught. In English, staff have found that pupils need support in using subject-specific vocabulary correctly. Staff have also found that pupils in mathematics need extra help with solving complex problems. Leaders have arranged support for pupils who need to catch up.
- In Year 7, leaders have changed how pupils are grouped in mathematics and the amount of time they study English and design technology.
- You told us that staff are paying particular attention to preparing Year 11 pupils for their next steps in education or training. Leaders have provided support to help Year 11 pupils get ready for their public examinations.

- In the sixth form, staff have focused on making sure that Year 12 students made a smooth transition from Year 12 to their final year of secondary education. Staff have been providing both academic support and careers guidance.
- Staff have planned and started to use their new approach to remote education. You told us that leaders are evaluating the quality of the provision and using the views of pupils and parents to make improvements. Leaders are trying to help families so that all pupils can access the digital-based elements of their remote education.

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 regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hertfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Al Mistrano
Her Majesty's Inspector