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Nichola Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Smith

Ofsted visit to St Helen's Primary Academy

Following my visit with James Duncan, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 20 October 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, the head of school and other senior leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding. 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 academy opened to pupils on 3 September 2020. All pupils are expected to attend full time.
- Attendance is broadly in line with the normal attendance for the academy at this time of year.
- Pupils are studying the planned curriculum in all subjects other than English and mathematics. Leaders explained that catch-up work is taking place, and the school plans to get back to the usual curriculum in English and mathematics before summer 2021.
- Pupils' phonic knowledge has been checked. You told us that teachers are adapting lessons to take account of pupils' new starting points following the period when the school was not open to all pupils due to COVID-19 restrictions. Additional catch-up sessions are being provided for some pupils.
- Teachers have carried out tests in mathematics and English with pupils in Years 2 and 6. In other year groups, teachers have checked what pupils can remember in more informal ways. Leaders explained how teachers are adapting their lessons to address gaps and misconceptions.
- You do not intend to carry out formal assessment for the wider curriculum. However, you are carrying out checks on curriculum coverage.

- When pupils are not in school, they are able to join in with live-streamed lessons that are being delivered by their teachers. Leaders told us that this system will continue if there is a need to deliver the curriculum remotely 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 board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Academies Enterprise Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Barnsley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector