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9 December 2020

Mark Fowle
Headteacher/Interim Chief Executive Officer
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Dear Mr Fowle

Ofsted remote visit to Bluecoat Meres Academy

Following my remote visit with Shaheen Hussain, Seconded Inspector of Schools, to your school on 24 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 director for academy improvement, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders, a member of the pastoral team and leaders responsible for English and physical education. 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:

- Since the start of term, many pupils have had to work from home for a period of time. Some pupils have had to work from home on more than one occasion. On one occasion, the school closed to all pupils for more than a week. A group of Year 10 pupils were isolating on the day of the remote visit.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not studying information technology currently. Leaders intend to review this arrangement in January 2021. In Year 7, more pupils than usual are receiving help with literacy in place of studying a language.
- Year 10 and 11 pupils are following their usual range of subjects.
- Leaders have changed the structure of the school day so that pupils spend more time in lessons. Year 11 pupils now have an extra one-hour lesson each day to catch up on English, mathematics, science or other subjects.
- Leaders have prioritised reading for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have found that pupils in Years 8 and 9 are not as confident or as fluent as they were previously. They are delivering whole-class reading activities and tutor-time literacy tasks to help pupils catch up.

- In mathematics, teachers have changed the curriculum plans to revisit previous learning, such as trigonometry in Years 9 and 10. Leaders have introduced weekly 'numeracy ninja' challenges to help pupils remember basic mathematical knowledge, including times tables.
- Teachers initially focused on pupils' well-being as part of personal, social, health and economic education. In physical education, teachers have found that pupils are not as fit as they were previously. Leaders have not been able to restart most extra-curricular activities.
- All teachers provide remote education for pupils who need to self-isolate. Leaders have made sure that every pupil has the technology necessary to access online learning. A small number of pupils use paper resources.

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 of The West Grantham Academies Trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Lincoln, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Tordoff
Her Majesty's Inspector