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Jane Hayman
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Dear Mrs Hayman

Ofsted visit to Fred Nicholson School

Following my visit with Tessa Holledge, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 8 December 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 and other senior leaders. 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:

- In September, most pupils returned to this special school on a rota basis. For the first four weeks, pupils attended school for two or three days a week, and accessed remote learning on the other days. Staff used this period to help pupils to re-establish relationships and acclimatise to normal routines.
- Pupils initially followed a 'recovery' curriculum. This focused on pupils' well-being, and staff assessed where pupils were in their academic, physical, social and emotional development. Staff also supported pupils new to the school as their normal transition arrangements had not been possible.
- In response to staff unavailability linked to COVID-19, leaders recently reintroduced the rota system for pupils in Years 3 to 9. Over a fortnight, pupils in these year groups attend school for half the time. Staff provide remote education so that pupils can access learning while they are at home.
- Pupils cover all of the subjects they normally study, with some changes. Specialist rooms are less available than before, and pupils do not have access to some of the technical equipment. Technology projects and the range of dishes pupils prepare in cookery have been scaled down.
- Pupils have fewer opportunities than before to apply what they learn in school in the community. They have not visited local shops or been on any trips outside of school. Staff plan activities, such as online grocery shopping, to give pupils alternative skills and experiences.

- Pupils have not accessed their normal range of therapies. For example, the hydrotherapy pool has not been available. Staff organise alternative activities, such as seated yoga, to help prevent loss of muscle tone.
- Assessments carried out by staff show that pupils' development looks very different across the school. Staff identified that some pupils have regressed, particularly in their speech, language and communication skills, while others have fared better. Leaders are using the additional COVID-19 funding to provide targeted interventions and additional therapy sessions to help pupils catch up.
- Any pupils who are unable to attend school due to COVID-19 restrictions can access learning remotely. Staff work with parents in order to help parents support their children at home. Staff provide a personalised programme based on pupils' needs, interests, and the targets in their education, health and care plans.

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 Norfolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Randall
Her Majesty's Inspector