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Neil Rodgers
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Dear Mr Rodgers

Ofsted remote visit to James Calvert Spence College

Following my remote visit with Jenny Thomas, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 19 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 and the senior leadership team, including senior leaders responsible for safeguarding. 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, no year-group 'bubbles' have been sent home to isolate due to COVID-19. A small number of individual pupils in Years 7, 10 and 11 have had periods when they have had to self-isolate and study from home.
- Pupils are studying their usual range of subjects. However, there are changes within some subjects, such as music; for example, pupils are not singing together in large groups. You said such changes are reviewed regularly, and you hope pupils can return to their usual curriculum by summer term 2021.
- Following assessments, you identified reading as a priority for extra support. You found that pupils' enthusiasm for reading has dipped since March 2020. Some pupils have fallen behind in their vocabulary development and reading fluency. Extra time and resources are being allocated to reading in Years 5 to 11 to ignite enthusiasm and to help pupils catch up.
- Curriculum leaders checked pupils' new starting points in subjects such as mathematics, geography and French. Some adjustments have been made to help pupils remember important subject knowledge and content that they have lost or missed. For example, Year 7 pupils have extra mathematics sessions, and pupils in Years 8 and 9 are spending extra time practising French. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are being supported to produce extended pieces of writing in geography.

- In the sixth form, leaders are focusing on students' next steps in education, training and careers. You reported that face-to-face opportunities with further education providers and potential employers have reduced but staff are sourcing alternatives. These include online opportunities and virtual meetings with local and national businesses.
- You aim to provide a remote education that matches pupils' learning within school across subjects. Pupils receive a mix of online and paper-based learning packages when studying from home. You mentioned that access to the internet can be problematic in this rural location. You plan to purchase more resources and equipment to support pupils and families at home.

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

Yours sincerely

Fiona Manuel
Her Majesty's Inspector