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James Ketley
Headteacher
Thurstable School Sports College and Sixth Form Centre
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Dear Mr Ketley

Ofsted visit to Thurstable School Sports College and Sixth Form Centre

Following my visit with Maureen Su, 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, the deputy headteacher and an assistant headteacher. 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:

- Since the start of the autumn term, a small proportion of pupils have had to learn from home.
- Pupils in all year groups are studying their usual range of subjects. Teachers have changed the order of what they teach and when. Leaders aim for pupils to return to their normal planned curriculum, in all subjects, by the summer of 2021.
- Leaders have checked what pupils know and can do in all subjects. Pupils in Years 7 to 10 have forgotten knowledge they learned over the summer and before March 2020.
- In Years 7 to 10, pupils have fallen behind in their writing. Teachers have found that pupils have less stamina than they had before, when writing for longer periods of time. Teachers are giving pupils the opportunity to write more and are revisiting what they have previously taught pupils about punctuation.
- In practical subjects, teachers have reduced what they teach so that pupils can catch up on learning they missed in the summer.
- In Years 11 to 13, leaders say that most pupils have not fallen behind. Teachers support any pupils who are behind in the way they normally would.
- Leaders say that when pupils study from home, they learn the same subject content they would if they were at school. When an individual pupil needs to study remotely, they use resources that teachers post online. Leaders say that

if they send home a year group 'bubble', teachers plan to teach the same lessons they would if the pupils had been in school.

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

Yours sincerely

Charlie Fordham
Her Majesty's Inspector