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29 December 2020

Anthony Sharpe
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Dear Mr Sharpe

Ofsted remote visit to St Bernard's High School

Following my remote visit with Wendy Varney, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 1 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. 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, four assistant headteachers, and the business manager. 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:

- At the time of the visit, no year group 'bubbles' were isolating at home. 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. Leaders are planning to return to the usual curriculum by the summer of 2021.
- In all subjects, teachers have checked what pupils know and can do. Teachers are spending more time helping pupils catch up where they have missed learning. Many of the usual extra-curricular activities have been temporarily paused.
- In Years 7 and 8, leaders say that pupils have forgotten some of what they have learned previously in some subjects. Teachers are revisiting subject content from pupils' previous years before they move pupils on to learn new knowledge.
- In Year 11, teachers are using time that would normally be planned for exam revision to teach pupils what they have forgotten or have not yet been taught.
- Leaders say that sixth-form students did not fall behind in their learning during the summer term, when schools were only open to some students.

- In some subjects, teachers have changed the order of what they teach. Teachers are planning for the practical content in some subjects to be taught later in the year.
- Leaders say that when a pupil, or a bubble studies from home, they learn the same content as they would if they were in school. Teachers upload the resources for each lesson, so pupils can access the learning online. Teachers provide video explanations where necessary.

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 director of education for the Diocese of Brentwood, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Southend-on-Sea. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charlie Fordham
Her Majesty's Inspector