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Kieran Larkin
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Larkin

Ofsted remote visit to Lowton Church of England High School

Following my remote visit with Michael Pennington, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), 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 with you, your deputy headteacher (who is also the senior leader responsible for safeguarding), two assistant headteachers, one lead practitioner (curriculum), the special educational needs coordinator, the senior pastoral lead and the local authority lead attendance officer. 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 the autumn term, every pupil at the school has worked from home at least once. All pupils in the Year 8 and Year 11 'bubbles' have had two periods of self-isolation since September.
- Pupils are following the full suite of subjects in their usual curriculum. However, you explained that teachers are making minor adjustments to the order of the curriculum content in some subjects, for example in mathematics and history. You aim to cover all of the usual content by the end of the summer term 2021.
- You told us that teachers are using a range of strategies within their everyday lessons to identify the curriculum content that pupils have not remembered from the learning they have done since March 2020. Teachers are adapting their plans to revisit the subject content that pupils need further help with.
- You have noticed that in Year 7, some pupils are not reading as well as they would normally be at this time of year. Teachers are providing extra support with reading and literacy.
- Across the school, you have identified that some pupils are less confident with writing at length. You attribute this to pupils completing less handwritten work

during the summer term 2020. You explained that in English lessons, teachers are focusing on developing pupils' writing skills.

- Pupils in Year 11 now have additional time in English, mathematics and science during the school day, and after school on three days per week. There is also additional time for history and geography after school on Fridays. You told us that this is to help pupils catch up on any lost learning.
- You described your approach to delivering remote education. You said that teachers prepare a combination of recorded lessons, live tutorials, live form-time sessions and other online resources, so that pupils can follow their usual timetable when working from home. Where this is not possible, you explained that teachers are giving pupils paper-based work.

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

Yours sincerely

Rachel Goodwin
Her Majesty's Inspector