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Catherine Cusick
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Dear Dr Cusick

Ofsted visit to Notley High School and Braintree Sixth Form

Following my visit with Katherine Douglas, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 3 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 executive headteacher and the senior leader responsible for safeguarding. 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:

- Most pupils learned from home when the school closed for four days. At the time of our visit, most pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 were self-isolating at home. Since the beginning of the autumn term, some Year 8 and Year 10 pupils have had to self-isolate and learn from home on several occasions.
- Pupils have access to the usual range of subjects. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, and students in Years 12 and 13, are taking examinations in the subjects they have chosen to study.
- Before half term, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 stayed in the same classroom for most of their lessons. Teachers have changed the order of the teaching of topics in some subjects. Leaders have recently revised this decision so that pupils can use specialist rooms and now resume the practical aspects of some subjects.
- Teachers are checking pupils' knowledge and understanding in all subjects. This information is helping teachers identify which pupils need additional support.
- In mathematics and English, teachers have altered their plans to focus on what pupils have missed or forgotten. For example, in mathematics, some pupils' mental calculation skills are not as quick as they normally are. In Year 9 English lessons, pupils are revisiting specific topics such as Shakespeare.
- Leaders have set up extra small-group sessions that run alongside lessons. During these times, staff cover the missed learning in English and mathematics.

- Pupils who are learning at home take part in online lessons. These may be 'live' or may be pre-recorded depending on the circumstances. When most pupils in a year group are at home, lessons are shorter by 15 minutes.

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, chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the North Essex Multi-Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Liz Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector