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14 December 2020

Amanda Ryan  
Principal  
Hillside High School  
Breeze Hill  
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Merseyside  
L20 9NU

Dear Mrs Ryan

### **Ofsted remote visit to Hillside High School**

Following my remote visit with Will Smith, 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 other members of the senior leadership team, including the senior leader 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:**

- You told us that approximately half of all pupils in the school have spent some time learning from home since the start of term.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to study all their examination subjects. Teachers are delivering additional sessions to help older pupils to catch up with any learning they have missed or forgotten since March 2020.
- Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have returned to their full timetable of curriculum subjects, apart from music. You explained that instead of studying music, pupils are using this time to revisit previous learning in English and mathematics. You intend to reintroduce music to the curriculum before the end of the autumn term.
- You explained that teachers have changed the content of some science and physical education (PE) lessons. For example, in PE teachers deliver circuit training and fitness instead of sports. You plan for all pupils to return to the school's usual curriculum by summer term 2021.
- You informed us that teachers are checking pupils' new starting points during lessons across all subjects. Teachers are using this information to help pupils to catch up with any missed learning.
- You have prioritised formal tests for all pupils to check on their reading skills. Teachers are using this information to support pupils with their reading across the curriculum.

- You have systems in place for pupils to access education remotely when needed. You have trained staff so that they know how to use these systems.
- Pupils follow a set timetable when working remotely. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 study extra English and mathematics content instead of music and drama. You have purchased specialist equipment so that all pupils can study art 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, chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the Wade Deacon Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Sefton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Linda Emmett  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**