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Lise Sugden
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Sugden

Ofsted remote visit to The Harbour School

Following my remote visit with John Randall, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 26 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, members of the senior leadership team and the senior leader responsible for safeguarding pupils. 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 this special school, no 'bubbles' were isolating at home at the time of the visit. Since the start of autumn term, 30 out of the 81 pupils on roll have been required to study at home for a time while they self-isolate and await test results.
- Staff have identified pupils' new starting points against the individual targets in their education, health and care plans (EHC plans) using a range of formal and informal assessments. You are hopeful that pupils will return to their normal curriculum before the summer 2021.
- As part of the recovery programme, extra time was provided at the start of term for staff to focus on pupils' mental health and well-being, with the aim of helping pupils to re-engage with learning. Pupils were encouraged to talk about any anxieties they had on their return to school. You told us that the school dog, Guss, has helped pupils to interact with staff.
- In the primary phase, staff are revisiting some aspects of phonics to help pupils regain their lost learning. You are prioritising pupils' reading and writing stamina, and arithmetic at an age-appropriate level.
- Pupils are studying their usual range of subjects in Years 7, 8 and 9, and staff are amending them based on pupils' needs. Practical subjects such as swimming, cooking and science have continued to be taught. Pupils are receiving extra support to fill gaps in their reading and writing skills.

- In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to study examination subjects. You have adapted what you are offering to fit in with what pupils can effectively manage.
- You use remote education to support pupils' learning when they are not in school. You say not all pupils' EHC plan targets, such as emotional regulation can be covered through remote learning. You provide paper-based packs of work and online learning resources; not all pupils have access to appropriate technology 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 interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cambridgeshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop
Her Majesty's Inspector