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Tim Hodgson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hodgson

Ofsted remote visit to Aylesford School and Sixth Form College

Following my remote visit with Alun Williams, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 12 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, the primary phase leader, members of your senior leadership team, senior leaders responsible for safeguarding, and subject leaders for English, mathematics, science and music. 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, approximately half of Year 11 pupils and 21 Year 12 students were at home self-isolating. Since the start of September, approximately one sixth of your pupils had to work from home at some time.
- All pupils are studying all of their usual subjects. Teachers have come up with a range of approaches to how the curriculum content is covered. For example, practical elements of some subjects are not currently covered in some year groups. Some science and design technology lessons are not taught in specialist rooms.
- Since returning to school, teachers have been checking what pupils have remembered from the spring and summer terms. You say that teachers then use the results to identify any gaps and plan what to teach. Subject leaders have told us that they have redesigned their plans after these assessments. In the primary phase, pupils now do more phonics and reading to help close any gaps. In the secondary phase and sixth form, work from the summer term is now being taught in the autumn term to cover all of the content.
- You have different systems in place to provide learning to pupils while they are away from school. In the primary phase, leaders have decided to use a system that is familiar to parents, which you say they already feel comfortable with.

Teachers create a weekly timetable of lessons for pupils. Work, either digital or paper based, is shared with children. Teachers review completed work that is uploaded.

- In the secondary phase, learning is either in the form of live online lessons or work based on digital resources. Leaders say that the work pupils get, in any year group, is as closely matched to their normal curriculum as is possible. You told us that staff provide resources, such as laptops, to vulnerable or disadvantaged pupils who are unable to access online resources.

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 regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Warwickshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Bianka Zemke
Her Majesty's Inspector