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Paul Willerton
Principal
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Dear Mr Willerton

Ofsted remote visit to The Sutton Academy

Following my remote visit with Rachel Goodwin, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 17 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 your senior leadership team, one of whom is also the designated safeguarding lead; the faculty leaders for English, mathematics, humanities and modern foreign languages; and members of the support staff. We did not speak to pupils and students.

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, almost two thirds of pupils and students have worked from home at least once.
- Across Years 7 to 13, pupils and students are accessing all of their usual curriculum subjects. However, you have made minor changes to the order of the curriculum content in some subjects, such as mathematics. You plan to resume the usual order of the curriculum by the summer term 2021.
- You described how teachers are using a range of strategies to assess what pupils know and can remember. They are using this information to establish pupils' new starting points.
- In Years 7 to 9, teachers are adapting how they deliver the practical elements of each subject. You told us that these pupils have full access to specialist classrooms and resources.
- You explained that in Years 10 to 13, teachers are adjusting how they deliver the content of examination courses. You said that this is because teachers have noticed new gaps in what some pupils and students know and remember. You explained that this is partly as a result of interruptions to learning due to periods of self-isolation.

- You have identified that across the school, some pupils and students are less confident with their writing skills, for example with punctuation and sentence structure. You attribute this to pupils and students not completing as much handwritten work during the summer term. You said that you are providing opportunities in all lessons for pupils and students to practise their written grammar.
- Currently, you are offering remote education to all pupils and students who must self-isolate. Teachers prepare online activities and resources so that pupils and students can follow their usual timetable. You described the systems that you are using to check that pupils and students are accessing remote education.

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 St Helens. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alyson Middlemass
Her Majesty's Inspector