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Sian Thomas
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Dear Miss Thomas

Ofsted visit to West Kirby Residential School

Following my visit with Ahmed Marikar, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), to your school on 9 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 and the deputy headteachers. 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.

From this visit, inspectors noted that:

- Since September 2020, around half of the pupils in the school have spent some time learning from home. At the time of this visit, pupils in three classes from the Years 7 to 9 'bubble' were self-isolating.
- Teachers have started to make checks on what learning pupils have missed or forgotten from the spring and summer terms 2020. This is to establish pupils' new starting points. Teachers are amending their curriculum plans to incorporate subject content that was not taught or that has been forgotten.
- Pupils across the school are studying all of the subjects that make up their usual curriculum. You explained that in some subjects, such as design and technology, you have changed the order in which the content is taught. You hope to return pupils to the usual curriculum by the end of the summer term 2021.
- Teachers' checks showed that some younger pupils did not have the phonic knowledge and reading skills that they would usually have at the start of the school year. You are providing additional support to help these pupils to catch up.
- Pupils across the school are struggling to recall some of the basic number facts that they were taught prior to March 2020. Teachers have revised their curriculum plans in mathematics to help pupils overcome the gaps in their knowledge.

- Across the wider curriculum in Years 1 to 6, you have prioritised the teaching of personal, social and health education since September. You have had to postpone some preparation for working life and independent living activities for older pupils. For example, pupils are not currently able to engage in work experience in the local community.
- In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to study all their examination subjects. Pupils in Year 11 now have extra lessons in science. You explained that these are to give these pupils sufficient time to cover the subject content that was missed during the spring and summer terms.
- You have made sure that older pupils, including those in Years 12 to 14, continue to benefit from subject-specialist teaching. For everyday lessons delivered in school, such as drama, teachers often use technology and online activities and resources. This is so that they can teach virtually across the different bubbles at the same time.
- Teachers provide work for class bubbles and individual pupils who are self-isolating. This work broadly reflects what is being taught in school. You explained that teachers sometimes provide alternative activities to support remote learning in practical subjects, such as art.

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 Wirral. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Pippa Jackson Maitland
Her Majesty's Inspector